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MR. CARINGTON.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SILENT SISTERS.

Τῷ δ' ὑποκουσασμένη τέκε Τοργόνος, αἰνὰ πέλωρα,  
Αἱ Σαρπηδόνα ναῖον ἐπ' Ὀκεανῷ βαθυδύνῃ,  
Νῆσον πετρήσσαν.

IN a southern suburb of London, close to the river Thames, there stands—at any rate it was standing a few years ago—an old square brick house, surrounded by more than an acre of land. This land was hidden from inquisitive eyes by a brick wall eight feet high, with *chevaux de frise* on its summit: and the only access to the house was by a heavily barred gate, through which few were ever seen to pass. Whoso rang the bell thereat was cautiously examined through a small grating—if indeed any notice was taken of him at all: it was as often one way as the other.

The grounds, which once had been a pleasant garden, were an untended wilderness. The house was built between court and garden, as the French say: but the court was toward the river and had access thereto by an old-fashioned water-gate, in the style (though of course on a far smaller scale) of those at the Tower and Somerset House. There was a shudder in the atmosphere of the place: any one entering it might well be reminded of that Dark Tower to which Childe Roland made his way, or of that Haunted House described by Hood. People in the neighbourhood could not make it out. No tradesman ever called there. The postman never had a letter to deliver. When the rate-collector wanted his money it was always ready for him, thrust through the grating of the gate-way in return for his receipt, no word being spoken. He was a garrulous little fellow, this rate-collector, Passmore, and he told his cronies at the "Spread Eagle" strange tales of the persons who paid him. Sometimes he caught a glimpse of an awfully old woman, with

only one eye and only one tooth ; sometimes of a very beautiful girl, but with a wild look in her face that seemed to freeze him through. Passmore always found somebody to treat him with grog after a visit to the Red House, as it was commonly called. It was the mystery of the neighbourhood.

Let us unveil that mystery. I have never quite understood why poor Phorcus, son of Sea and Earth, was condemned to have six such objectionable daughters—the three Graiae, who were born very old, and had among them but one eye and one tooth, which they lent each other on great occasions—and the three Gorgones, who had a sort of wild beauty, only their hairs were snakes and they had marvellous biting and scratching faculties. True the legend must be, for are not the descendants of the Phoreydes among us ? Who has not seen the appalling ugliness of old Pephredo, the still more appalling beauty of Medusa ? Can there be a Congress or Conspiracy without them ? Do they not fire cities and disestablish churches ? Are they not rampant in conversaziones and loquacious in reviews ?

At about four on a winter's afternoon, there sat three daughters of Phorcus in a room on the ground-floor of the Red House, overlooking the courtyard that abutted on the river. It was a dreary day : snow fell, and turned to mud : the fog was so thick that omnibuses were lost in the streets, and all the cabmen had gone home to their gin and pipes. The floor of the room in which these three persons sat was of stone, uncarpeted : a small fire flickered in a huge grate : two tallow candles burnt upon the table, feebly fighting the fog which forced its way through cracks and crannies and chinks innumerable. The old decaying timbers of the house creaked ominously in the wind. A huge spider, hairy-legged, with a body the size of a florin, walked about the deal table. The weird sisters were silent.

Two of them were elder daughters of Phorcus : one belonged to the younger family. All three were in long black dresses, sombre and without ornament : on the front of each dress was a number sewn in white. Those numbers were 8, 11, 13. They were used as substitutes for names, and denoted order of standing in that secret society known as the "Silent Sisters."

No. 8 was in the seat of honour. She was a woman somewhere between sixty and seventy, with an expression of countenance so painfully bland that it recalled that rhyme of childhood :

"Will you walk into my parlour ?" said the spider to the fly."

Her hair was white ; her voice was soft ; she held her head on one side ; her hands were slightly tremulous. You would never have imagined her the cruellest woman in England. You would never conceive what those glassy old eyes had witnessed, what that low soft voice had commanded.

No. 11 looked a century old. Her head shook with chronic paralysis. She had fewer teeth than any legendary daughter of Phorcus. Her eyes were green, her lips blue, and her cheeks the colour of adipocere. Any story of ghoul or vampire might well be believed in this old woman's presence. One would not like to touch her hand, dreading the moisture of the charnel-house.

No. 13 was young . . . twenty-two perhaps. She was very tall and rather ungainly in her build. Her hair was yellow; her face and hands sallow and freckled; but her eyes were the most remarkable of her features. They looked quite different ways, and the left was considerably larger than the right, and of a different colour. The left was a cat's gray: the right was a gipsy's black. No. 13, for the rest, seemed incapable of sitting still an instant. She fidgeted perpetually, and was evidently anxious to break the silence. With much alacrity she sprang from her seat when a small bell tinkled. She took up a candle, opened a door at the back, and admitted the daughter of Phorcus whom we must know as No. 6, though the figure appeared not on the dress she was then wearing.

No. 6 was about twenty-eight, I should judge. She was dressed in blue serge with anchor buttons, and a straw hat. She brought in with her a rather large black bag. She was a woman decidedly handsome, but with a touch of wildness. She took the seat vacated for her by No. 8, opened the bag, and placed its contents on the table. There was some bread and cold meat and an immense budget of letters.

"I am not hungry," said Six. "I lunched with Count Vlassoffsky. If you will eat, I will just glance through the despatches, for which I have not yet had time."

Eight, Eleven, and Thirteen went sharply to work on their coarse fare. Perhaps they wished they had been with Six at Vlassoffsky's in Piccadilly. But they dared not say so. The despotism of equality is stern.

While three of the Silent Sisters are eating their frugal meal, and the fourth is perusing her despatches, it may be as well to say a little more about them, and their allies—the Free Brothers. The four members of the secret sisterhood whom I have attempted to describe were all of different nations. Eight was English; a widow; a woman of some property. She carefully avoided doing her duty to her children, in order to do her duty to the future republic of Europe. She sent cheques to assassins and mob orators until the day when the Silent Sisters found her out; with them she passed an apprenticeship to conspiracy, and was now obliged to expend her money under their direction.

Eleven was a Parisienne, and was supposed to have been blessed by Robespierre as he passed to his fate on the 28th of July, 1794: she

was a girl then, and on her way to be married as the *tombereau* passed with its load of human ordure. Now she was deeply venerated by reason of that benediction. She was a saint of the democratic church. Its most infallible Pope had canonized her by a word. She could not have been hideous years ago: for though devoid of money, she had married—and outlived—three husbands.

Thirteen was Italian—Neapolitan indeed, though without any of the beauty frequent in lotos-eating Parthenope. Those who have visited Naples must however have noticed that there is some fine well-developed ugliness in that city, as indeed in most parts of Italy. 'Tis all very well for Byron to exclaim:

“I like the women too (forgive my folly),”

and to talk of “the rich peasant cheek of ruddy bronze,” and “the high dama’s brow:” but I guess he greatly preferred the healthier and purer and less easily withered beauty of the English. He says just before that he “likes to dine on becafico;” if he had been kept upon them for a week, how he would have longed for a rump-steak and oysters! For my own part I have seen Englishwomen lovelier than any Madonna of Rafaele’s, than any face that Guido has painted. I do not think an English girl could be uglier than this young conspirator from Naples.

Six, who is poring over her letters, who is handsome in a wild way, whose eyes seem first to fascinate and then to frighten, is Russian. She was born a serf. Now, after ten years passed in the chief European cities, she is recognized by her colleagues—both Free Brothers and Silent Sisters—as one of their most useful instruments. She can talk many languages; she can act many parts. She is already higher in the association than Eight, who is wealthy; than Eleven, who has received the blessing of Robespierre; than Thirteen, who has in her veins the blood of Bourbon.

The Free Brothers and Silent Sisters had hitherto done little business in England: but these four of the sisterhood had recently come over on a special mission. The organization of the two Societies is a curious development of the principle of the Sheikh al Jebel or Old Man of the Mountain, who maddened his followers with hachish, whence they came to be called *Assassins*. The maddening potion of these conspirators was the dream of liberty, but in trying to obtain it, they subjected themselves to the most rigorous despotism. Every member possessed absolute command over members of lower grade. The male and female guilds were separately numbered: but No. One was the same in both, and was entirely unknown to any members of either Society except No. Two in each. Whether No. One was man or woman remained a profound secret. No Llana or Mikado was ever fenced round by more impenetrable mysteries.



What brought to this country four Sisters and two or three Brothers was Prince Oistravieff's residence here. Hunted out of every country in Europe, he thought himself safe in England. But the allied societies of conspirators would not leave him alone, for revenge was sworn against him, and he was known to be an Imperial favourite, and it was thought that he might be meddling in matters political. So Oistravieff was systematically pursued. Doubtless No. One had his reasons for giving the order.

No. Six at any rate had good reasons for carrying it out. Ten years before she was Paulovna, daughter of Ivan, a pretty girl ready to be married. Even in wintry Russia there are pretty girls. Serfdom still existed: this child could not marry her Demetrius without leave from the Prince, her master and her father's master. Old Ivan went to Opotchka, where lived the Prince's steward or bailiff; an old man endowed with obsequious loyalty to his master's family. Unfortunately the Prince was shooting in the neighbourhood, and was to sleep at the steward's house; the old scoundrel kept the girl waiting till he returned; the result has already been indicated. When Demetrius her lover and Ivan her brother fiercely remonstrated, the Prince was already beyond their reach, and the steward coolly ordered them to be flogged. Ivan Ivanovich was a Free Brother already: Demetrius joined him: both were now in England. Oistravieff, always a terrified man, would have been driven wild with terror had he known his position.

When Six had finished her letters, and her companions their meagre meal, she condescended to give them some news. She had been at the house of Count Villassoffsky, a Pole, No. Four among the Free Brothers, a daring and resolute hater of monarchs. She had lunched; Six being a silent sister whose special talent was society, was obliged to break the abstemious rules of the order, and eat luncheon and dinner now and then in an Epicurean fashion. Whether she in consequence endured ayenbite of inwyt does not appear.

"Prince Oistravieff returns to London this week," she said to her associates; "he has been in the north: some accident has happened to him: he is now at an hotel at Carlisle, where a doctor is attending upon him. I am very glad he is not killed."

This information Six had obtained from the Polish Count, who was supposed to be most loyal to the Czar, and was on the most intimate terms with Prince Oistravieff.

"Can we get hold of him now?" said Eleven, with a guillotine glare in her eyes. "It is time, I think."

"Yes," said Six. "It is time. I have arranged all with brother No. Four. I am going to pretend to be what I suppose the Prince would say I *ought* to be—or perhaps I *am*. I shall dress magnificently: there are dresses enough upstairs—I am to have a low carriage and pair of ponies: I am going to buy jewelry and perfumes and gloves

in Bond Street : the Prince, who is to stay at the Clarendon, cannot fail to see me. Count Vlassoffsky will tell him I am a wicked woman ; I am to be called Lily Page ; I am to bring him home here. There, that is the plot."

"If we get him here all will be well," said Thirteen ; and saying it, glared horribly. I suspect she had in her mind some notion of inflicting on the luckless Russian some terrible personal punishment.

The Count had arranged with Six that a carriage and ponies should come to the Red House two days later ; he thought it well that the Town should talk about her, and that Oistravieff should hear her name from others beside himself. So a perfect equipage, drawn by a pair of lovely little Exmoors, was driven down by a groom of the smallest dimensions ; a Tiger Tim—

"Tallest of boys or shortest of men,  
Who stood in his stockings just four feet ten"—

and who was No. Seventy-Five among the Free Brothers. Miss Lily Page, in a costume of light-brown velvet with pale blue fringes and ribbons and abundant lace and jewelry, caused no slight sensation as she drove in the Park, using her parasol-whip quite skilfully—as she turned into Bond Street for some shopping.

In two or three days, during which time she appeared in as many dresses, she was famous. Everybody asked who she was. Who indeed ? That much-read journal of gossip and garrulity, the *Sunday Cynic*, gave a charming biography of her under the classic title of *Aphrodite Mithote* : it was a purely imaginary memoir, and gave her noble birth and strange adventures—but did not give her address. This was Vlassoffsky's inspiration : he gave Jack Raven of the Savage Club the information and a five-pound note, and the editor of the *Sunday Cynic* gave a cheque for three guineas for the article. Jack Raven lay in bed all through Sunday, after an unusually moist supper on Saturday night.

There was a war breaking out at the time ; there were monarchs in danger, and premiers in disgrace : and if you were to look back at a file of the *Times* you would be surprised at the vast importance of the events chronicled thereon, and forming the themes of leaders by gentlemen of unquestionable omniscience. For all that, Lily Page was the chief topic of conversation among the loquacious inhabitants of Clubland. You should have seen the bow-window of White's and Brooks's when she drove her ponies down the classic street of Saint James.

"By Jove," said old Lord Seabrooke, who had seen a good many handsome women, good and bad, in his long irregular life, "that is a fine girl. She makes me feel young again."

"You are lucky, my lord," said Tudor Trevor, the famous Welsh

poet who has announced but not yet published *A Trillion Triads*. "I am only a boy, yet I feel too old to renew my youth by seeing that pretty young person."

The ladies whom "this pretty young person" surpassed as to the style of her equipage, the speed of her ponies, the smallness of her groom, were unanimous in her condemnation. She certainly was not pretty—that point was settled *in limine*.

"I cannot think," said the Lady Barbara Brabazon, who had six daughters as tall as life-guardsmen to marry, "what young men can see in such a creature as that. She has neither beauty nor style—nothing but impudence. I detest such low-bred minxes. They would have been well flogged when I was young—"

Thus did the Town, male and female, criticize Lily Page. Her aim was reached at any rate: when Prince Oistravieff, slightly battered, contrived to come to London, and settle at the Clarendon, he heard the name of this questionable new-comer from every mouth.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### LILY PAGE.

*Benedict.* A breath, a beauty, a delight, a phantasy,  
A creature that's half hornet and half butterfly . . .  
You have seen such.

*Raphael.* Ay, and they are not innocent—  
This gay young thing is innocent and beautiful—  
She is all butterfly . . . a flower with wings to her . . .  
A bit of sunrise with a soul. *The Comedy of Dreams.*

LONDON is always thankful for a sensation. It is a city drab in summer and soot-clouded in winter. It was very thankful for Lily Page. She was a butterfly mystery. She fitted through the avenues of fashion at the most fashionable hours, and then vanished untraceably. She was the talk of the hour—the radiant bubble on the surface of the social stream. Girls asked awkwardly who was Lily Page, and got no definite reply. Boys merely conjectured, but were not so simple as to ask questions of their respectable elders. Elderly gentlemen of a rakish tendency, who I regret to say were not unknown in London a dozen years ago, though they now have happily disappeared or become members of School Boards, used to try all manner of methods to follow that rapid pony carriage. But if Lily Page saw a horseman following her she tired him out by driving into districts the most uncivilized, and nobody succeeded in tracing her to that Red House where she dwelt with Eight and Eleven and Thirteen.

A likeness of Lily Page, if I remember aright, was popular in

those days, though it certainly could not have been taken from her; anyway she was the Town's chief talk. Everybody wondered who in the world she could be, and foreign affairs did not receive anything like decent attention. The gay old First Minister, lounging across the Park of an afternoon, caught sight of Miss Lily, and thanked heaven the Commons of England had something besides his policy to think about. He was not altogether without curiosity as to who and whence she was. He had written gay rhymes in his youthful diplomatic days, and flirted in many a conservatory with a flower between his lips. This new apparition amused the boyish statesman, to whom might well be applied the saying,—“Whom the Gods love die young.”

Lily Page drove about London at the electric hours, and vanished at the gateway of the Red House at the proper time. Then she became Six once more, and kept her subordinates in order, and enjoyed that tyranny which lies at the basis of all folk with a passion for liberty and equality. This girl was born for a better fate: but the one great anguish of her life had turned her from a woman to a Fury: and she was not improved by her initiation in conspiracy.

Prince Oistravieff had returned to town, a little dilapidated—to write metaphorically. His nose, which had always evinced a preference rather for one side of the face than the other, had manifestly decided which was the right direction to take. Oistravieff was not improved by that blow from Frank's strong arm; he would have challenged his assailant, but he averred that somebody gave him opportune information that Frank was not of noble birth. So the Oistravieff, who had a princely disdain for canaille, told his acquaintance that he thought no more of the affair than of an accidental bite of a dog. Evidently he held the great patrician theory, that a blow from a superior is a compliment, a blow from an inferior an accident.

When the Prince took up his quarters at the Clarendon, where, be sure, he received that warm welcome which innkeepers have for all men, but specially for Princes, he had an early call from his friend Count Vlassoffsky. They had experiences to exchange. The Prince had been in the country; it was terribly dull; your English Earl is slow and torpid; your English misses are as icy as their winters. The Prince had nothing to communicate. He was glad to be back in London, though of course London was the dreariest capital in Europe. London was stagnant; he had serious thoughts of trying New York or San Francisco for a change.

The Count, on the other hand, assured him that London was not altogether so dull as usual. He had heard of several conspiracies in progress, one against the Czar and another against the Emperor of the French and a third against the Pope. He meant to have an evening reception of conspirators and conspiratrici only.

“Conspiratricei,” quoth Vlassoffsky, “are next in interest to canta-

trici. We are to have some good singers at both houses this season. London will be gayer than usual."

"I am glad of it," said Oistravieff gloomily. His nose still pained him. He felt hatred for all things English after contact with one prompt English fist. Frank Noel had given him acute Anglo-phobia.

"You will see," said the Count gaily. "My friend, you are bored. Ring the bell, and look at Bond Street through the sparkling atmosphere of a glass of Hiedseck. Have you heard of the Lady with the Ponies? Of course not. She is our latest theme of gossip. It is nearly her time to drive this way," he added, looking at a watch the size of a half-sovereign which he carried set in a ring on his finger.

"Who is this wonder?" asked the Prince with less languor than usual. "What do you know about her?"

"What all London knows—and that is, nothing. She is a new comer; no one can find out where she lives; she may be a lady—she may be anything you please. She is spoken of as Lily Page. She is amazingly pretty. By the way, there she is."

The Prince and the Count were standing by the window. The narrow street was crowded with carriages. Lily Page's fairy equipage was stopped right in front of the hotel. She looked up at the moment, quite unconsciously.

"I have seen some one very like that girl," said Oistravieff. "She is handsome. Let us go down and take a stroll."

"The fish is hooked," thought Vlassoffsky. Six got from him an accurate account of all that happened, and was advised to be very shy and coy, if he attempted to throw himself in her path. She took the advice.

A week passed; some days beyond a week; all the while Prince Oistravieff passed his afternoons in watching for Lily Page, in following her. She purposely gave him his opportunity at last, though he fancied it was all accident. It was just at the corner of Pall Mall and St. James's Street; she was driving towards Piccadilly; the Prince came out of Sams's shop. The lady dropped her whip—pulled up her ponies. Of course Oistravieff picked it up in a moment. She rewarded him with a charming smile, and drove away.

After that, he had a bowing acquaintance with her. She was shy and haughty. Still he contrived to ingratiate himself, very dexterously as he imagined—and his little manœuvres were not unwatched; and the fast young quidnuncs of the west decided that the Russian was going ahead with Lily Page. She was always so quietly courteous to him when he got a chance of speech that he scarce knew what to say. One day he took the Count into council.

"I cannot understand that girl," he said. "Who is she? What is she?"

"Do you want to know? Ask her to dine with you at Richmond."

"She would think it an insult."

"Pshaw! Well, shall I ask her—I, who have never spoken to her?"

"Would you venture?"

"Would I not? Have I lived so long, to be afraid of a girl? Come, I'll bet you a dinner at the 'Star and Garter' for the three of us that she accepts."

"Done," said Oistravieff.

We, who happen to be behind the scenes, know that according to the law of wagers this bet was void, as it was a preliminary certainty for Vlassoffsky. However, the Prince was only too glad to lose his bet and pay for a dinner; and it was arranged that the Count should drive him down in his mail phaeton, and that the lady should meet them there.

It turned out one of those bright crisp afternoons which sometimes occur amid even a London winter. The Count drove round to the Clarendon from Piccadilly, and took the Prince across Wimbledon Common and through Richmond Park, to the famous hotel. It is not crowded in January; but perchance you may get a better dinner and ampler attendance when this is the case. Vlassoffsky had not left the matter to chance, but had taken the trouble to drive down, choose his room, order his dinner in the most artistic style. He did this because he intensely admired this heroic silent sister; he knew her history, approved her revenge. A Polish noble was not likely to feel pity for a Russian scoundrel like Oistravieff.

So, when they reached the "Star and Garter," there was a room ready, a fire burning, bouquets of exotic flowers on the table, everything enjoyable. The Epicurism of the north had been remembered; on a side-board were appetizing dishes—caviare, raw boar's ham in slices, oysters, anchovies, tunny, flanked by small flasks of inflammatory liqueurs. Prince Oistravieff fancied himself back in the city of Peter the Great.

The lady was late. When she entered, having divested herself of her bonnet (there were in those days bonnets visible without a microscope), dressed in silk of sea-green, with coral sprinkled abundantly about her, and one deep scarlet camellia in her hair, she was a vision of wild beauty. The Prince was fascinated, astounded. He had never seen anything so magical. His fancy for Elinor was altogether gone. He had an excellent appetite for the dinner which he had lost.

To describe a Richmond dinner would be slightly absurd: on the present occasion it may be assumed that there was the earliest and most tasteless of house-lamb and foreign asparagus. To eat everything out of season is the perfection of fashionable dining. Vlassoffsky, an old campaigner, dined chiefly on devilled leg of turkey and bitter beer. Oistravieff ate everything, eatable and uneatable, and

poured sparkling wines down his throat with Slavonic alacrity. Lily Page ate a cutlet and a snipe, and drank water.

That the Prince tried to look tenderly at Lily, to say soft things to her, is of course. He was so much like an ogre in love that the girl, if she had not supreme reason for hating him, would have been amused by him. But all through the evening, amid the odour of flowers, the gleam of glass and silver, the sparkle of wines, there dwelt in her brain the remembrance of a lonely house in a far country, of a poor innocent girl—herself, yet another self, subjected to the worst imaginable suffering. Ten years! All the while, no revenge! Would the revenge come now? Had she indeed got this traitor and tyrant within her power at last? Such thoughts passed through her brain, yet she managed to talk gay nonsense. Count Vlassoffsky looked at her with admiring wonder. He knew her story; he knew her design; he was amazed at her self-control.

Coffee was served, and liqueurs. The Russian was gay, having dined well, having anticipation of intrigue. There was a piano in the room. The Prince was a musical mediocrity; most barbarians are; he sat down and executed some amazing fantasy upon the keys. He did not attempt to sing. No man would, who in his time had gradually frozen his throat by swallowing an iceberg. The delicious tenor, the mellow contralto, come not from the frozen Neva, come not indeed from the foggy Thames: seek them where sapphire waves laugh beneath sunshine of the Midland Sea.

Still woman, who in her fortitude is greater than man, sometimes falsifies this theory: has not Sweden given us the most famous though not the most perfect singer of the age? And Lily Page could sing. When the Prince rose, having made a noise as Mendelssohn used to say, she came gaily round to the piano—a wicked mermaid in her sea-green and sea-coral, with a flower in her hair as red as revenge: and sang a strange wild ballad.

“Down by the shore of ocean,  
Afar in the summer south,  
There was a merry maiden  
With a rosy little mouth.

“O how she loved the sunshine  
In the happy leaves at play!  
O how she loved the moonlight,  
Silver shed on the bay!

“She was a child—a baby—  
The wild bird sang at her feet,  
The south wind gave her kisses,  
The rivulets called her *sweet*!

“There came a man to woo her,  
A traitor fiery and free—  
Ah, where is the sweet young maiden?  
Ask rather: *where is he?*”



I assure you that Lily Page gave to that last verse an intensity of emphasis which rather astounded the Russian. It did not astound Count Vlassoffsky, because he had left the room. It was agreed that a song should be the signal. Lily should surely have sung a softer song.

The Prince, perceiving his friend's absence, began to make suggestions of an indelicate kind in as delicate way as he could command. Lily's longing for revenge helped her to act a part : she played numerous coquetries upon this old *roué* ; she extorted from him promises of enormous guerdon ; she played him as an angler plays a trout. A hot and bitter memory of shame helped her to do what she innately detested. And in due time she told him that if he could send the Count back by himself on any pretext, she would drive him home to her own house.

Full of delight, he went off to find Vlassoffsky, who was smoking on the moonlit terrace. He explained : the Count received his explanation freely. Meanwhile poor Lily Page had rushed to the dressing-room to which she had been shown, locked herself in, and was kneeling, sobbing, wildly praying God to forgive her for what she was about to do. Strong of will though she was, and with a great crime to avenge, she grew frightened now that the time came near.

Vlassoffsky cheerfully chaffed the Prince on his conquest.

"You are fortunate," he said. "You are the only man in town who has ever been asked to Miss Page's house. What will you have to tell us when you appear in Pall Mall to-morrow ?"

The Count knew well enough that Oistravieff would not be visible in Pall Mall for some time to come.

"I shall order out my horses and drive home," he continued. "Give my respects to Mademoiselle. Treat her tenderly—she is a delicate creature, any one can see."

The Count drove home, laughing as he made his horses trot fast along the hard road in the keen moonlight. The Count was a chivalrous aristocratic republican, who loved women and hated emperors. Of a race born for subjugation, he naturally stooped to conspiracies and intrigues. Great races are daring and straightforward. Catiline and Brutus showed the weakness of Rome. In England none but cowards and fools have ever conspired. Pericles held that a great man may dissimulate, though he may not simulate. I maintain that no truly great man will do either.

Prince Oistravieff returned to the room where dinner had been served. Lily Page also had returned, having prayed her prayer and sobbed her sobs. Neither prayer nor sob was perceptible as Oistravieff quietly opened the door : she had just sat down to the piano, and was singing a merry little trifle :

"Do you think you can love ? O no !  
Love's a thing that you never knew.



You can kiss, you can flirt,  
Treat girls like dirt,  
Say the sweetest eyes are blue  
Or brown or gray . . . but O  
You never can love. No, no !

"Do you think I can love—love true ?  
Why I love all lovely things . . .  
Love the birds as they pass,  
And the flowers in the grass,  
And the tree that a soft shade flings,  
And the diamonds of early dew.  
O yes, I can love . . . not you."

"What a cruel song, Mademoiselle Lily!" said the erotic ogre.  
"It is growing late. The Count has gone home. Shall I have the infinite pleasure of attending you to your residence?"

"O yes," she said. "Please order the ponies—I am quite ready. What sort of a night is it?"

"A beautiful moonlight, very frosty."

"Let us go," she said. She was suddenly in high spirits—her enemy was in the toils. She threw off her depression, and resolved to do her duty. She laughed at her previous fancies as hysterical. "I will punish this scoundrel," she resolved.

So the pony carriage was brought round, and knowing No. 75 stood at the horses' heads, and the Prince, in a victorious mood, threw a gold coin to the waiter in attendance, and away they went. I suppose Oistravieff had scarcely ever a pleasanter half-hour than that which he passed, with Lily's ponies at full gallop in the moonlight, between the "Star and Garter" and the Red House.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE RED HOUSE.

"The whirligig of time brings in his revenges."

THE dingy, dreary, mysterious Red House was brilliant this night. The ever-closed gate was open for Lily Page's ponies; the neglected garden looked pleasant enough in the misty moonlight. The salacious Russian saw everything through a rose-coloured atmosphere; felt joyous and victorious. Somewhat different feelings were in the lady's breast as she halted her ponies in front of the dingy old portico. "Sweet is revenge," says Byron; "especially to woman." Surely, if in any case revenge is a virtue, it was so with this poor Paulovna.

The Prince Oistravieff was shown upstairs, to a room furnished in

an old fashion of heavy comfort. His companion excused herself for a moment, and left him alone. He sat on a huge red sofa, by a comfortable fire, and congratulated himself on his conquest. This mysterious beauty whom all London was wondering about had fallen into his arms at the first invitation. He plainly saw that he was superior to men in general. Thus we all flatter ourselves. No man ever believed himself too old, too ugly, too stupid, to fascinate the sweetest young creature that combined beauty and wit at their acme. Oistravieff lounged in his sofa, luxuriously puffed a cigarette, waited patiently for Lily Page, whom he regarded now as his own property. He was left some time alone, but he was in no hurry.

At last the door opened, and there entered a figure that seemed at first a stranger to him. It was a woman with dishevelled hair, clad in a long coarse blue gown, the customary dress of a Russian peasant. Well enough knew Oistravieff that dress, for hundreds of women so clad were at work on his estates, were his own property as much as the cattle there. What did the creature want there? He rose angrily at the intrusion. He was in no humour to see anyone save Lily Page.

Ah! but Lily Page it was: it was Paulovna in her old rustic dress of ten years before. With her sea-green and coral she had thrown off fascination; with her dark blue serge she had put on revenge. The Prince stared at her in bewilderment. He could not utter a word.

"Have you forgotten Paulovna?" she asked in a harsh voice, very unlike that which had made Richmond musical.

The Prince was frightened. We know he was a coward at heart: that Carington had proved. But a man less cowardly might well have been thunderstruck when there arose before him a spectre of past outrage. The men who have least remorse have most fear. Oistravieff sank back on his sofa, speechless. Paulovna, by nature fearless, almost pitied him.

"So," she said, "you did not know me, Prince Michael Oistravieff? You had forgotten the poor slave who was your victim in her childhood. You are unchanged. You go through the world doing the same wicked and cruel things. You have been watched, Prince Oistravieff: every step you have taken has been traced: the Silent Sisters have always had their eyes upon you. The time has now come for your punishment."

As she spoke, many thoughts ran through his brain. He was a strong man; she a mere woman: should he force his way out? He feared that there were others at hand to help her. He had not courage enough to risk all results, and fight his way through. He made a confused attempt to express sorrow, to ask what amends he could make, and so on. She let him go on, regarding him with contempt. She felt something of that pleasure in playing with his fears which a cat has in tormenting a mouse.

"Sorry, are you, Prince?" she said. "Sorry for what you would do again to-morrow. I am not a fool, thanks to you. I owe my education to your Highness. If you had not condescended to see beauty in the poor little ignorant serf, she would not now be driving about London in a handsome carriage. See what it is to be noticed by a Prince! Ought I not to be grateful? O yes, I *am* grateful."

I suppose there are few things more terrible to the male sex than to be scolded by a woman. I know that when I was a school-boy I much preferred Dr. Stone's birch-rod to his wife's tongue. It was believed among us that the Doctor himself would often have been glad to have a flogging substituted for the curtain lectures under which he undeniably suffered. As to this wretched Oistravieff, though physically a coward, I think he would have accepted the knout to escape from Paulovna's keen sarcasms.

"What am I to do?" he said at last.

"O! you wish to know! What came you here to do? Did you think you had found a pretty woman who might be bought with gold? You like to enjoy life, Prince Michael. How long do you expect to enjoy your wickednesses now you are in the hands of the Silent Sisters?"

Oistravieff shuddered. Paulovna touched a hand-bell. The door opened, and two men entered . . . tall men, with dark fierce faces.

"Do you know these?" asked Paulovna. "You have some memory, Prince Michael, I suppose, though you had forgotten me. I had not forgotten you. This is my brother Ivan, Prince: this is Demetrius Brakinska, who was to have been my husband. They would both be your slaves, you know, if you had them in Russia; you could have them knouted to death . . . and me also. Don't you wish you were in Russia now?"

Poor Oistravieff, sick with terror, was at his tormentor's mercy. She did not spare him.

"O Prince Michael," she said, "I wish you were not such a coward. I might think better of you if you had courage enough to defend yourself, in word or deed. I might have been sure of it: none but a coward at heart could have done what you have done. Take him away, Ivan."

The two men silently advanced and led him from the room. Paulovna threw herself into a chair and wept. Her excitement was succeeded by reaction. She remembered too clearly the bitter sorrow of her girlhood. Up to this point she had been carried forward by the glad thought of revenge; now she was saddened by the remembrance of her wasted life. How she had loved Demetrius Brakinska! How he had loved her! They might have been parents of children by now, living on the old farm which his father had tilled. All was changed; they were conspirators for life. Conspiracy has a fascination of its own, and may claim to be at least as much a fine art as

Murder ; all secret doings are attractive to human nature, for some mysterious reason. Still there must be times when a conspirator would like to be a free man, just as the habitual drinker of alcohol sometimes pines for water. No. Six was decidedly proud of the talent for conspiracy which had placed her so high in the confederation. She liked her disguises, her adventures, her power over her subordinates (women all like power) ; but, now that she had attained the chief desire of her life, and had entrapped the scoundrel who had injured her, she looked back with regret to the little peasant Paulovna of the past, and wept over the futile dream of what might have been.

Meanwhile Prince Oistravieff was led downstairs by Ivan and Demetrius to a cellar, the door of which was locked upon him. His state of mind was not pleasant. That had happened to him which he had dreaded for years ; and the substitution of actual suffering for the apprehension of suffering is sometimes a relief. But Oistravieff did not know what he might have to endure ; and the change from the gay excitement of an amorous adventure to his present situation was too severe a shock. Heartily did he wish Paulovna's pretty face had never struck his fancy ten years before. He could expect no mercy. He remembered distinctly all the events of the time ; and that Ivan and Demetrius, in whose power he now was, had been flogged for venturing to object to his princely proceedings.

The cellar in which he found himself was uncomfortably damp, being so near the Thames. There was an unpleasant odour of mud and rats about it. There was but one small window, not glazed but grated. A tallow candle had been left on a common deal table in the centre of the room. When the Prince had sufficiently collected himself, he took it up and examined the place, which was of considerable dimensions. There was not much to reward investigation. Here and there were old worn shelves, which may have had generous wine upon them in days when the Red House was a pleasant dwelling. Now he saw not even an empty bottle. Besides the ricketty table already mentioned, the only articles of furniture were a deal chair which stood near it, and in a remote corner, a rough wooden couch, such as you see in soldiers' guard-rooms, but entirely without anything in the way of rug or covering. The Prince perceived something lying on it, and brought the dim candle nearer. What he saw was a scourge with several lashes . . . the implement known in English gaols as a cat-o'-nine tails. Oistravieff shuddered. It seemed as if he were shut into a chamber of torture. In the old days in Russia he had ordered his serfs to be flogged as a mere matter of course, without caring whether they were strong or weak, old or young, male or female ; but the idea of stripes on his own princely cuticle made him feel faint. He retreated from that awful corner, replaced the candle on the table, and sat down.

What was he to do? Evidently he could do nothing. Even in the day no cry of his could be heard from that deep cellar. Repnin and his other servants would make no inquiry about him for some days; they were accustomed to his occasional absences. Vlassoffsky, whose complicity in the trick played upon him he did not suspect, would of course merely imagine that he and Lily Page were happy together. As apparently her residence was a secret to the world, even when people began to wonder what had happened to him, there would be no possibility of tracing him. These reflections, and a thousand others, worried his brain till he grew stupid; and at last sheer exhaustion caused him to sleep in his comfortless wooden chair. When he awoke, chilly and miserable, daylight was struggling through the grated window, and on the table near him were a crust of bread and a jug of water. Some one had evidently entered the cellar while he slept. Though an inveterate gourmand, he ate his bread hungrily, thankful at least that he was not to be allowed to starve. We none of us know what small things may make us grateful.

It may seem that cruel punishment was inflicted on Michael Oistravieff, a Prince of the best blood in Russia (where good blood is highly valued), by his imprisonment in this damp cellar. Yes, it was cruel. But can you dissociate cruelty from barbarism? As the Czar is, so will be the serf. The world has not forgotten the fierce freaks of the Archduke Constantine in Poland; how he fed prisoners on salt fish, denying them water—how he set Cossacks to stare into their eyes. The rulers are no more responsible for the race than the race for the rulers; they act and react; if there are cowardice and cruelty on the throne, there will be cowardice and cruelty in the hovel. Wherefore let no man wonder that the serfs who desired to revenge themselves on Prince Oistravieff, tortured him severely. Could anything else be expected of them? They had learnt a lesson not easily forgotten—the lesson of stern revenge. It was perhaps well for this luckless prisoner that he had Paulovna to deal with, as well as Ivan and Demetrius; for, with all her anger at past anguish, she could not help feeling a kind of half-pity for Oistravieff. Indeed, I think she would have liberated him if a chance had occurred, and taken the consequences—consequences not trivial, since she would have disobeyed the chief rule of the Society; but there was no such chance, and Oistravieff remained in his cellar, and got his bread and water at intervals, and was as miserable as he deserved.

Days passed. Prince Oistravieff ate his bread and water, and grew weaker daily. His patience was tried. In this damp cell his bones grew rheumatal; in this frightful imprisonment his brain grew stupid. A very few more days would have made an idiot of him. Meanwhile his people at the Clarendon were just beginning to wonder a little what had become of him, and he was missed in his

accustomed haunts, and there was a whisper of inquiry about him. He made a figure in the west, you see. A Russian Prince with a huge income is a great fact in the realm of fashion. It was heartily agreed by many pretty English girls that Prince Oistravieff was a perfect gentleman, and might reconcile them to becoming subjects of the Czar. These innocent creatures, possible princesses in their own eyes, missed the Prince in time; so did his cronies at the board of green cloth and the *coulisses*; so did Repnin, and the rest of his suite; so did the landlord of the Clarendon. The thing became serious as the days passed on. Where was Prince Oistravieff?

Unfortunate victim of his own vices, he still lay in durance vile. Bread, water, mud, damp, darkness, were his fare. The squeak of a rat was his only solace. That familiar quadruped is the very last that leaves a gentleman in difficulties of this kind. The slang phrase "to rat," was invented by some one ignorant of the habits of an animal that never deserts its friends while there is any flesh upon their bones.

The Prince had been in his dungeon about four days, when there entered Ivan and Demetrius. He was utterly depressed and miserable. The two men looked at him with the glance of the wolf, and laughed sardonically at his abject fear.

"The Prince has not all the luxuries he requires," said Ivan. "What can we obtain for his Highness?"

"His Highness would like soft beds on which to lie, and sparkling wine, and a lovely lady to wait on him," said Demetrius. "His Highness is not as properly treated here as he deserves."

"Why do you not bring his Highness some wine?" asked Ivan. "He should not be neglected in this way. One hair of his sacred head is worth the very souls of you and me, Demetrius—ay, and of Paulovna."

"True," replied Demetrius, "true. I had no right to love my Paulovna. She was a sweet bright child, and I was a foolish boy. We wandered under the pines together. I fancied happy days and happy nights; what she fancied I know not; little she said, but lovingly she looked into my eyes. She sang sweet little songs. She whispered happy thoughts. Then—well, Ivan, you know what happened. The Prince exercised his princely right, and we have nothing to do but return him thanks."

"Let it be done," said Ivan. "Michael Oistravieff, lay bare your cowardly shoulders."

The Prince, shuddering, obeyed. Ivan Ivanovitch gave him two or three stripes.

"Pshaw!" he said, "I can't do it. I suppose princes like to flog and peasants don't. There is no pleasure in scourging a scoundrel."

"It is humiliating to touch him, dear Ivan," said Demetrius. "Let us leave him. I hate to be in his sight."

They left the luckless Prince to his cellar and his rats. They went to a tolerably cosy room upstairs, where a pleasant fire was burning. There they sat awhile, drinking some spirits, and smoking tobacco of the strongest.

"So you have scourged a Prince, Ivan!" said Demetrius, laughing. "Poor devil, how he winced! I am glad not to be such a coward. You did not hurt him much."

"No, indeed," said Ivan. "I only wanted to shame the scoundrel, but I don't think it can be done. Now what are we to do with him?"

"We must await orders, I suppose. He is snug enough in his cellar, and we are snug enough here. Let us drink and smoke and wait."

These things they did. Half an hour later entered Thirteen, gave an awkward courtesy, and presented to Ivan a scrap of paper. Thus ran the rescript:

"Marry your sister to Michael Oistravieff. Notary and priest will be ready at two. Do all they tell you.

"Two."

This document Ivan threw across to Demetrius. Demetrius, having read it through more than once, buried his face in his hands. Then he suddenly said—

"Ivan, my brother, we must obey. It is right, I suppose. It is hard, very hard. I have loved my pet Paulovna all these years, you know—she was too good for me, too beautiful, too pure. I love her now. But ah, Ivan my brother, we have been always slaves: we were slaves from our birth: we are slaves now. Darling Paulovna! she is to marry this Prince. Ah, but how lovely she was with her white arms bare to make that beautiful cream cheese you were so famous for, Ivan! Do you remember?"

"Be quiet or I'll thrash you," said Ivan. "It is a great calamity that my sister should be a Princess, but how am I to escape it? No: it must be. No. Two shall be obeyed."

Two of the clock arrived. So did Notary and Priest, the latter (of the Greek Church) provided with a licence.

"Where is the bridegroom?" said the Priest. "Bring him hither."

Ivan and Demetrius brought the Prince from his cellar.

"You are Michael Oistravieff?" said the Priest to the shuddering Prince.

"I am," he replied.

"You wish to marry Paulovna Ivanovitch?"

"No, indeed," he said.

"Take this fellow away and give him a dozen sharp strokes of the

whip," said the Priest to Ivan and Demetrius. He was obeyed. When the hapless Prince returned, he said:

"You wish to marry Paulovna Ivanovitch?"

"I do."

"You wish to settle upon her thirty thousand pounds which you have in the English funds?"

No answer. This was a hard struggle.

"Am I to order you another flogging?" asked the Priest.

"No, I will give her the money. I will do all you wish. I must submit, I know."

"What you do must be done of your own free will," said the Priest. "You must swear that it is so—swear him, Notary."

The oath was taken; the deed was signed. Paulovna was a bride, all but the nuptial rite. When the preliminaries were settled she entered the room, led by No. 8. She wore the sea-green and coral of Richmond; she was a perfect picture. I remember a miniature painting of Michael, a boyish archangel, treading down that old traitor Satan. She looked a girl-Michael—he looked a coward-Satan . . . old, withered, vanquished.

Now, can you imagine how our conspirator-heroine looked . . . what wild disdain was in her lovely eyes? It was the moment of supreme revenge; she was now to be the Princess Oistravieff. Very quietly she went through the service; as for the Prince, he seemed hardly to know what he was doing. Tall men have too great a distance between their brain and their heart. They are sluggish in difficulty. It takes a little fellow like Napoleon to conquer the world.

The ceremonial was gone through, both Priest and Notary doing their necessary duty: Ivan and Demetrius were witnesses. When it was over, Paulovna turned to her husband and said:

"You acknowledge me now as the Princess Oistravieff?"

"I do," he replied.

"That is well. I do not mean to live with you, for I despise you too much. You will remain here until I decide in what way you can best show the world that I am your wife."

So Prince Oistravieff was still a prisoner in the Red House, but not (this time) in the cellar. They gave him more comfortable quarters, and better entertainment.



## CHAPTER XVII.

## AGAIN AT DELAMERE.

*Alix.* She is a very wicked girl, I am sure of it.  
I will not speak to her again or think of her.

*Raphael.* Pahaw, sister ! why the child is just as innocent  
As you were when . . .

*Alix.* When what ?

*Raphael.* When God created you—  
Or when my fellow-student, Roderic, looked at you.

*The Comedy of Dreams.*

THE Earl of Delamere falsified the prediction screamed forth by Lucy Walter ; what she had taken for a death-struggle, was in truth the struggle of a marvellous constitution against the weakness of advanced age ; and when Mr. Carington entered the Earl's room he found him recovered, vivacious, full of spirit. It was indeed pretty clear to any observer of human nature that Lord Delamere was not a man to be killed by a trifle. There was too much natural vigour in him. The men who have most to endure are usually those most capable of endurance. The Earl was as tough as an oak, and neither wind nor thunder did him much harm.

Mr. Carington, an accomplished student of human nature, took the Earl in hand with singular skill. He left him alone, until he spontaneously spoke forth. The Earl was the most curious mixture of sincerity and hypocrisy that you could meet with : he was the sort of man who, having swindled the tax-gatherer out of two and sevenpence, would send ten pounds' worth of conscience money to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It may be safely said of him that he strongly disliked doing anything which he ought to do. There was a cross-grain, a warp, a cantankerous element in his nature. I suppose this sort of thing is usually dependent on digestion, and that the perfect temper for which I am famous is due to the fact that I feel quite happy after a couple of pounds of rump steak, with a hundred oysters melted into sauce. Your Catilines and Buonapartes must have been men of stomachic weakness. Would not Blue Pills put an end to Red Republicans ?

"Carington," said the Earl, one day, when the climax of his attack was over, and they were alone together, "do you think I am going to die ?"

"One of these days," said Mr. Carington ; "it is a thing we all do in time. No gentleman objects."

"Ah," said the Earl, "that's your easy pleasant way of dealing with the matter ; but when a man is so near death as I have been, he thinks of it seriously."

"A man should think seriously of death before he gets near it," replied Mr. Carington. "I have long thought seriously about it. It is merely passing from one room to another of God's great Palace, the Universe."

"It is a treat to hear you eloquent," quoth the Earl; "you mix cynicism with poetry, like curaçoa in coffee. But now, my dear friend, as I seem to have come to life again—for a short time at anyrate, will you answer me a few questions? You know me pretty well, Carington, though it is so long since last we met: you know the situation wherein I find myself. What would you advise me to do?"

"Is that the first of your few questions, my lord?" asks Mr. Carington. "Why, 'tis a thousand questions in itself. You have so many matters to consider in reference to your great estates and your innumerable dependants. I, who am a born student of genealogy, hear that it is doubtful to whom your entailed estates are to descend, and that the House of Lords and the College of Heralds will have some difficulty in deciding whether there can be a Countess of Delamere in her own right. Mine is imperfect information—I merely retail the gossip of the clubs. I heartily wish long life to the present Earl of Delamere."

"You are very good," said the Earl. "You know what I feel on the subject?"

"Now that," said Mr. Carington, in his easy way, "is the last thing you can expect me to know. I am not omniscient. You expect me to know how you feel on a question which is entirely your own, and which you probably have not mentioned to many men."

"To no one save yourself," said the Earl.

"And why in the world mention it to me, my dear Delamere, unless you desired to be fortified in a foregone conclusion? I know some points of your problem: of others I am imperfectly informed. So far as I can judge—forgive me for saying it—you know what is right to be done, and you prefer to do what is wrong."

Some elderly aristocrats who (like Lord Delamere) had been all their lives doing something weakly wrong, might perchance have quarrelled with their adviser, throwing something at him after the method of Taffy the Welshman. This was not likely to occur to Carington. He had gone about London for a good many years telling truth in what we call epigrams. If a man was a fool, Carington said so. He was a good judge, and had a brilliant way of summing up. He hit the exact blot in Delamere's character when he thus parodied the *Video meliora*.

"In this world," said Lord Delamere, "right and wrong are frequently confounded, and the better side gets the worse result. You let me put to you a question entirely apart from that which is troubling me in my sickness, and yet slightly akin to it. Suppose a man had a legitimate child by a wife whom he hated, and an illegitimate child

by a woman whom he loved—to which ought he to leave such property as he could deal with?"

"I like your question," replied Carington; "a neat bit of casuistry, yet easy to answer. *To the legitimate child.*"

"Why?" said the Earl, angrily.

"Why! There are plenty of becauses. Because it is the law and custom of England and of Christendom. Because no man has a right to marry a woman he hates—"

"But suppose he is forced into it," said the Earl.

"He deserves his fate. Further, having married a woman he hates, under inadequate pressure, he should not wrong her by dealing with any other woman. Every man should bear his own burdens."

"You are most logical," said the Earl, "and the cases I have put to you are merely analogous with the case which concerns me, and there are points therein which I have not submitted to you."

"I know it, my Lord. I think indeed that I know what I may venture to call your mistake. How shall I put the argument? You have two . . . ."

"Stop!" exclaimed the Earl. "You are a nuisance, Carington. There isn't so moral a man in England with so much immorality. Ring for my servant: I want some cooling drink."

Carington rang and laughed.

"Delamere," he said, "I really should be glad to get you serious. What we have been talking about affects me not in the least—if you enter the next world before me, I shall expect a mourning ring—no more. But this matter which you refer to, is of quite as much importance to you—of more importance—than to anyone whom you benefit or injure. I know just what the world knows: I know as the world knows, where according to the custom of England all the property ought to go. I know where the rivalry lies—both rivals unconscious, though one is of a far nobler type than the other. I can give you my advice in four words."

"And those?"

"Don't be a fool!"

"My dear Carington, I can retaliate with four words quite as weighty. 'Don't be a bore!' I think I have made up my mind."

"Easily can I believe it," said Mr. Carington. "I have seen the two girls, as you know. I fancy I can see how each of them behaves to you."

"Carington," quoth the Earl, "you are a special pleader, I swear. They both behave charmingly. They are both as soft as the south wind, and as modest as the May lily."

"By Jove, old fellow, you've taken a new lease of life. When a man talks zephyrs and lilies he may dismiss his gruel. What a pity the canon forbids you to marry your—"

"Hush!" said the Earl. "My marriageable days are over. I'll break no canonical rules."

"I don't think you will," replied Mr. Carington: "but let us return to the old question. You know how strongly I feel upon it,—that my feelings entirely contravene yours; and that I have not the least interest in telling you that you are wrong. Will you, now that I thank God you are in better health, test the matter somewhat farther before coming to a decision?"

"It would be curiously ungrateful on my part, Carington, to refuse any request of yours, though I see nothing to be gained by it. I have been villanously treated."

"Yes," said Mr. Carington; "but you did not act with perfect fairness to Rollo."

"Perhaps not: perhaps—well, it is hard to say—yet, one does not care to be reminded of such things."

"Now there I differ from you," said Carington, with an emphasis widely different from that silky Caringtonian method known in the clubs. Imagine a silk glove drawn from a gauntlet of steel!

"You differ!" said the Earl, in his sternest, keenest voice.

"Ay," replied Mr. Carington, "I absolutely differ from you, my old friend. I say that if by accident, if by fault of temper, if by any of those weaknesses to which we are liable, we have made some blunder—evil both to ourselves and others—it is well to be reminded of it. I would give a dozen years of life if I could make right one of my mistakes as easily as you can this one of yours."

"Carington, you are an enthusiast."

"I was one night, many years ago, when I backed the red for a few thousands, and heard the croupier cry, '*rouge perd*' all through. I have lost since then more than I lost upon *rouge*. If I had known that I was loved by—well, never mind, Delamere. I have missed *my* chance: why should you miss yours?"

"I have been missing chances all my life," said the Earl, sadly. "I suppose no man in England knows better than you, Carington, what I did in the old wild days with Lovelace Noel—and before. No man! Well, here I am, with a great estate, with a ruined constitution or whatever you call it—what shall I say? with fifty times more money than I want, and not half as much health nor half as much brain. I'm getting better, they say: what's the good? Tomorrow I shall be getting worse. Never mind—what do you want me to do?"

"I suppose we have all of us gone too fast who were capable of going fast at all," said Mr. Carington. "It is wise to leave one's regrets to the next world, where, according to the orthodox, they will be utilized and intensified. I want you to do nothing, my dear Delamere, except what you choose to do yourself. Accident has brought me into knowledge of two young girls, both of whom I think

charming—I was always an innocent lover of girls. I think Lucy Walter a pretty piquant child—full of vivacity. She is everything to everybody—a perfect actress.”

“Well, perhaps you are right,” growled the Earl, arching his great gray eyebrows. “How about your little favourite, Elinor? What of her? Any good to be said of her?”

“By Jove, Delamere, I should like to meet the fellow who said any harm. She is a regular little nymph of the mountains—an Oread and yet an English girl. You know far better than I what claim she has upon you: and if you put the two girls together—though your little actress Lucy has only the fault of being too much an actress—look at the contrast.”

“Well,” replied the Earl, “as you are so devilish eloquent, I fear I shall have to look at the contrast.”

*(To be continued.)*

## ABSOLVO TE.

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Two loved a few years since, and read anew  
The mysteries of God ; and earth and sky  
Were but reflections of a great I Am,  
Whose name was Love : for Love is God, they said,  
And thought it were the same as God is Love.

So they smiled on in a large land of smiles,  
Where, as of old, the blind man with half-sight  
Saw men as trees before him : and their feet  
Went airily along on untouched earth,  
And birds were angels, and to love was life.  
And with the eyes of children that first see  
And know it, so they saw and wondered much  
How they had ever lived so blind before.

And then the real awakening came—the day  
When, children still, they learnt to see beyond  
The mazy borders of the land of Love ;  
Saw more than men as trees, and learnt to know  
The harder after-lesson of “ I feel.”

All life not fair—all men not true ; some hard,  
And some as pitiless as hail from heaven.  
And a gaunt figure called the World strode up,  
And came between them, and the gods of earth  
Lift up themselves and asked for human hearts,  
And theirs were offered on the golden shrine.

They parted, as the old tales run ; and none  
But God and such as part can tell the woe  
Of the long days that moaned themselves away  
Like billows beating on a sandy shore,  
Whose song is ever of long Death and Time—  
Forever breaking their full hearts, and still  
Uppathering all the weight of woe again  
To break for ever. But billows that are tired  
Sink down at last into a patient calm,  
Seeing their breaking fruitless. And so she,

Wed to another, with the child she bore,  
Rocked her old sorrows into fitful sleep,  
And prayed the Holy Mother bless the child  
And keep him safe, heart-whole from love and grief.

So many years rolled by ; when on a day  
The sun of warmer countries beating strong  
Upon the Roman's city, flooded all the dome  
Of Peter as with fire from God. And there  
Within, alone in that great solitude,  
Keeping his watch for any lambs might seek  
There to be shriven of their sins, and set  
Anew upon the highway of their God,  
A priest, unseen, with his long wand outstretched.  
Silence reigned speaking. And to his heart and God  
The Father spake. When, lo, there swayed far-off  
The outer curtain, and there came the tread  
Of swift light feet along the marble way.

A woman fair, with beauty of full life ;  
Girlish in all her movements, yet with pain  
Of Holy Mother by the Holy Rood,  
On the sweet face from which she cast the veil,  
And looked about her. But the beckoning wand  
Called to her mutely—and she paused and knelt.

" Father, canst understand my English tongue ?  
Yea ! then I thank my God, for I am sad,  
And burthened so with sin, I cannot walk  
With head erect among my fellow-men,  
And I am stranger here, and would confess.

" Father, it was no sin : it seemed not so  
When it was near me, in that time long past ;  
But good thoughts, held beyond their time, are sin,  
And good thoughts asked of us by God may turn  
To foul corruption if we hold them here.  
Listen to me. A long, long time gone by  
I loved. Start not. My love was free ; no chain  
Bound me to suffer. All the world was mine,  
And over it there flushed the rosy light  
Of a new love—God knows how true and pure !  
Father, a love that holy men like you  
Need never shrink from. Such a love as but  
To taste the blessedness of loving so  
Were heaven on earth. But then to hear and learn

He loved me was a tale too great, too dear,  
 For mortal heart to bear alone, and bear.  
 And so God thought to make us one—for I  
 Had died, but that his heart could share with me  
 In part the joyfulness, the too-much bliss.

"Father, when just my weaker soul had grown  
 To lean its fulness on him—when the times  
 And seasons passed unseen, because that I  
 Felt only constant summer by my side—  
 Then—they came between us. Had he died  
 He still were mine hereafter. Christ Himself  
 Has His own bride, the Church. But I was wed,  
 And he passed from me to I know not where.

"Father, the years have passed. I thought that I  
 Had learnt so well the lesson—to forget.  
 But Memory listens, as a wakeful child,  
 And all the more the watcher bids him sleep,  
 He opens wide his eyes, and makes reply,  
 And will not sleep for bidding. It is so,  
 Father, with me. And in my children's eyes  
 I see reproaches; and their baby-hands  
 That wreath me seem to say, 'You are not true,  
 Not a true mother, for your life is past:  
 You only love us somewhere in a dream.'

"Father, he lives—my husband. And his love  
 Speaks too reproaches. For when he can smile,  
 I cannot, as good wives should do, smile back,  
 And lie myself to gladness. I turn there,  
 My God! to those long days have burnt their brand  
 Into my heart. When I could live: before,—  
 O Father! that 'before!'—that great, great gulf  
 That gapes between us! Ah, I hear you start!  
 Did you speak, Father? I am vile, but now  
 Shrive me before I take my load away!

"Stay! there is one stain more. If I should see  
 His face—again—on this side of the grave,  
 My God! and if he called me, 'Will you come?'  
 I sometimes think I could not choose but go!  
 Pray for me, Father—I have told you all.  
 But God is gracious—do not you be hard—  
 But answer, Father, and then shrive me so!"



There was a long, long silence as she knelt,  
And then, at length, a voice as of the wind,  
Moaning a little in a wooded place,  
Came to her softly.

“ Daughter, be thou still  
And patient. It is the great God’s will.  
I, too, have suffered : had a love like thine,  
And lost it ; and long since have laid it by.

“ Daughter, go home. It were not well to stay  
Longer in this blest place—we two—alone.  
I shrive thee so—from sin ! Pray thou for me,  
As I for thee. In heaven—hereafter—  
I will speak with thee again ! ”

She moved, she rose, and passed out from the place,  
With heart made gladder. And the curtain fell,  
And the soft footsteps on the marble died.

It was the silence only and his God  
That heard a moan beyond the outstretched wand ;  
A long, long sigh, as of a spirit past.  
And then, in broken whispers, came at length :—

“ Into Thy hands, my God ! the gate is past—  
Death hath no longer sting, and Life hath nought  
For me to fear or shrink from any more.  
My God, I thank Thee ! Thine the power, the might,  
That held my breath, and made me more than man !  
If I have suffered my full meed of pain,  
Let me go hence ! And on the other side  
Shew me Thy Bride ! that I may fill my soul  
And have no aching there—nor any part  
In looking earthwards—back to earthly things ! ”

That night in Rome a heavy bell tolled slow  
In convent walls. And cowlèd brothers prayed  
For Brother Francis, entered into rest.

C. C. FRASER-TYLLER.

## THE PENNY MAGAZINE

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THE readers, if any, of certain autobiographical papers which, under the same signature as this, appeared in the last volume of the ST. PAULS MAGAZINE, will remember a hint dropped by me that I wished to say something of the help I had received in early boyhood, and later, from the Penny Magazine of Charles Knight. Of course the recent death of that gentleman has revived the subject in my mind, and it may perhaps serve as an honourable pretext for attempting to interest the reader a little in the same topic.

We have nothing like the Penny Magazine now. It is wonderful how fashions in reading matters change, and how things which seem to have in them the seeds of indefinitely prolonged life die out for reasons which at the best have to be sought for far and wide before they are traced, and which in the majority of cases are never to be found at all. There is a phenomenon which every working littérateur must have noticed, and a very amusing one it is : namely, that in about every half generation, there is a revival and reprinting in the periodicals of the day, of the stories, anecdotes, and odds and ends which were used for padding about fifteen years or so previously. In this way a miscellaneous reader who has lived to five-and-forty has the gratification, such as it is, of having the same things put before his eyes two or three times. But the phenomena of the case go much further than this. About every ten or twelve years it seems that a fresh set of the younger minds is at work in producing minor literature for current purposes, and we find naturally enough, though the effect is rather tedious and sometimes a little depressing, that the new set of the younger minds begin just where their predecessors did, make the same mistakes, show the same traces of imitative docility of a low order, use the same arguments, and show just the same untruthfulness and tendency to cotton to "whatever is going forward—" (I am thinking of an occasion on which Wordsworth used these words in a droll way.) The result is that much more than the miscellaneous padding of current literature is repeated from time to time. But though there are these repetitionary producers (please award me a prize for this lovely phrase) of literary matter for a reading-market which seems to come over again about every fifteen years, it is not always, or usually, that the book or literary miscellany which was successful fifteen years back could profitably be reprinted to-day. It is not easy to say whether a reprint of the Penny Magazine would succeed or not,—but it ought to do ; for we have had no recent

periodicals at all like it, and the few articles which circumstances have deprived of nearly all but a quasi-antiquarian value could easily be omitted or qualified.

Since the first publication of the Penny Magazine the Genius of periodical literature, if that is the name by which to call the power that presides over its arrangements and adaptations, has decreed that there shall be a much more thorough division of labour, so to speak, in periodicals than there used to be. Serials of instruction run more in departmental grooves, and the others devote themselves frankly to purposes of entertainment. The serial novel, often by a first-rate hand, forms also a new feature. Would it be near the truth to say that the periodical readers of to-day are, so far as weeklies go, very largely composed of two classes,—those who take in Cassell's *Educator*, Chambers's *Information*, and other special organs; and then the women and readers of light literature, who take in the magazines which have running stories? This would not be exact, but there would be in such a mode of representing the facts, some approach to the truth.

Periodical buyers of the new generation have, as a rule, no idea of what the Penny Magazine really was; still less of the great value of its literature and its pictures to the ill-provided poor student of thirty odd years ago. Nay, we must by no means omit the children, for I was myself but a child when it first appeared, and I reckon the fact that my father took it in as among the very happiest incidents of my life. Those were the days, or somewhere about the days of the Reform Bill agitations, and I have no doubt the new comer had a very beneficial effect in preoccupying or sub-occupying (another lovely word!) and soothing poor men's minds in those days of bitterness and turmoil. I am sure, looking back, that this was the case with my father, who was a radical of the most savage school. But of course I had at six, seven, or eight years old, no political passions to trouble me, at least none that concerned themselves with such trifles as Reform Bills, running on the Bank for gold "to stop the Duke," or riots in Coldbath Fields. True, I had speculations or dreams which must be termed political, for they inevitably included cities, but they were cosmic in their essence; and carried on up as high in the air as became a boy who was so simple-hearted as to believe in Cupid as a real entity. For so I did; and on Valentine's day I sought him long and earnestly in Hoxton Square, Shepherd and Shepherdess Fields, up by the Rosemary Branch, and in other accessible parts equally rural;—for I had easily gathered from the valentines I saw in the shop windows that Cupid revelled in "bowers" and "meads," and I was young enough to regard even Hoxton Square as something in the nature of a mead, with bowers, all correct.

It is not for nothing that I have allowed the pen to glide into this

side-track, it has something to do with what the Penny Magazine was to me. My father had been something of a traveller, and its pictures of cathedrals, &c., were the great attraction to him; because they carried agreeable reminiscences with them. But the case stood otherwise with myself. The Penny Magazine was an exceedingly varied miscellany,—with woodcuts, two or three in a number. There would be Lichfield Cathedral; the cave of Staffa; a picture of Hogarth's; the Parthenon; the Diana Belvedere; Sir Walter Scott; the Portland Vase (—I am inclined to think *that* was the first number my father ever bought, for he was “nuts on” the Portland Vase), the Boy extracting a thorn; the resting Nymph who belonged to the train of Diana; a new suspension bridge; a great deal of natural history; Fuseli's Lycidas; and in fact an indescribable variety of things. The literature of course corresponded to the woodcuts, and most excellent it was. There were articles on Fractions; on James Watt; on macaroni; on the cartoons of Raffaele; on paper-making and printing; on the teazle; on factory questions; on the lives of great men; on music, and what-not. These were all well-written; some of them betraying the hand of a master; and all of them in correct taste and high in tone. Then there were, of course, scraps of various kinds, “to make even columns,” poems, anecdotes, and a very few jests. Stories there were none. But there were accounts of the travels of Marco Polo and Busbequius; an abstract of Hutton's autobiography; some memoirs of the Deaf Traveller, Dr. Kitto; and—from the same hand—two or three striking papers entitled, “A Poor Student's Literary Ways and Means,” and “A Poor Student's Literary Expenditure.”

Mr. Knight himself said, I think in one of the latter numbers, that his object had all along been to make his magazine serve some such purpose as that of the glass called *the finder* in a telescope. There may have been thousands to whom it really did serve that end; it certainly did so to me in a most beneficent degree and way. The reader of my previous papers will scarcely have gathered the extent to which mine was an almost book-less home. My mother took a passionate interest in books that related to theology and morals, but of these there were not three under our roof; and other books we scarcely had. Besides the Bible, and Watts' Divine and Moral Songs, my spelling-book and Tables, &c., I do not at the moment remember that we had a single book in the house except the “Pleasing Instructor.” This was a collection of Addisonian and quasi-Addisonian essays; with anecdotes, mostly of the ancients, arranged alphabetically under such heads as Adversity, Love, Patriotism, &c. To these were added a few poems, such as Parnell's Hermit, bits of Young's Night Thoughts, Gray's Elegy, Mallett's Edwin and Emma, and things of that sort. All this was good in its way, and it helped me. Perhaps the fact that I had so few books,—or almost none at

all indeed,—had some share, along with a natural predisposition of course, in originating that habit of reiterated readings of the same books, in which I have never yet met a single human being like myself. And that reminds me, that when I was about eight years old, a solemn wisacre remarked to my father that the Penny Magazine was a bad thing because it tended to form people to habits of desultory reading! I listened to this with some awe at first,—what a shocking thing it would be if poor I, ambitious as I was of the highest attainments of the student, should grow up desultory! and I thought of this all the more, because my father was, visibly even to me, a rather scatter-brained man. Fortunately, however, my love of knowledge outran my fear of becoming “desultory,” and I read my Penny Magazine all day and put it under my pillow at night, when I had not got a Bible or hymn-book there.

Now, what was the first and special value of Charles Knight's periodical to me? This, that it was, like Arthur's Round Table, “an image of the mighty world.” From “the cabin'd loophole” of my life among poor and ignorant people, I got by its means a glimpse of almost everything,—ancient and modern places of note, remarkable buildings, the careers of distinguished men, applied science, political economy, poetry, great public movements of all ages, and, last not least, Art; using that word as most people do use it, to signify art products. Along with all this went an immense and varied moving mass of allusion and even scholarship; and this also came in for some sort of digestion, and certainly, even in my childhood, for full recollection and a place in the store-house of the brain, where it lay for years ready for future use. There must now be many thousands of persons whose lives are as confined as mine was then, but where is the Penny Magazine of to-day,—the periodical “which is an image of the mighty world,” the serial of miscellaneous entertaining *knowledge*? You can buy periodicals of science or of literature; you can get your weekly story; or your “Races of Men;” you can satisfy almost any special want or taste in this line, but where is your cheap little periodical *Cosmos* (more fine language!)? As to the desultoriness, I can only inform the reader that Mr. Knight's “finder” glass was really a finder to me, and that it was wonderful how the things it helped me to see got classified and connected in my mind for future use. I can scarcely conceive myself without the Penny Magazine.

Of its suggestive value to me in some special particulars, I can easily recall a few instances. For instance, the well known lines of Dr. Jenner on Signs of Rain, I got by heart (as I did most things merely on one or two readings and without any effort), and these lines gave me much to think about. They were, in fact, the first suggestion which ever entered my mind of the scientific correlation of facts in nature.

The picture of the Giraffe—then, I think, an animal new to Europeans, or at all events to Englishmen—had a very odd effect

upon me, and one which the reader would never guess. I said it looked as if it had been born by accident—and other animals gave me, as they still give me, and I believe give children, the same impression. In spite of what beauty the giraffe possesses, it looks as if its proportions had been arranged haphazard—at least it does to me—and young as I was, this disturbed me.

Then the story of Pascal put my nose out of joint a little. It told me that, being denied the use of mathematical books by his father, he found his own way some good distance into the first book of Euclid. Now this was the first time I had heard of Euclid, but the description given of the problem or theorem the boy was said to have reached all unassisted, convinced me that there was somebody who could do what I could never do myself. The story as it stands is incredible, and is now discredited; and the mortification it gave me at the time did me no good; for I was always over-distrustful of myself, and needed not that anyone or any fact or fancy should sit down upon me. It was years before I recovered from this shock.

For the natural history papers in the Penny Magazine I never cared; I rarely read them, and my father was much vexed when he found I did not even like the Zoological Gardens; I would not even look at the monkeys and the snakes. This is not the case with young people in general, or with old ones, so no blame to Mr. Knight.

But I got to know of printing, paper-making, and even of political economy, as much as the Magazine could tell me. And very soon after it was taken in at our house, I got excited over the articles about the British Museum, and the woodcuts of beautiful statues and buildings, and asked my father to take me to the old place in Bloomsbury. He very kindly took me more than once, and, in spite of his own love of "bigotry and virtue," was much puzzled, as I *now* see (at the time I thought he was displeased), at my very decided preference of the Grecian and Roman rooms in the Gallery of Antiquities to all the rest of the museum put together a hundred times over. Not even Egyptian mummies could rouse me to enthusiasm. But I doted on the crouching Nymph of whom I have just spoken, upon your Venus, your Apollo, your Discobulus. The picture in Mr. Knight's Magazine of the front of the Parthenon and of the Belvedere Diana used to fill many a sleeping and many a waking dream of mine. Ben Jonson's exquisite hymn, "Queen and huntress, chaste and fair!" I did not understand, but the words glittered in my mind like the names of jewels. I had a decided preference for Doric architecture and the simpler Gothic, and when out in the world at a little berth, where I had much running about to do, managed nevertheless to steal time and strength to have many a look at three buildings in London. I would run into Guildhall, and eat a penny loaf for a dinner in a corner, and then hurry away to one of three places,—the Temple

Church, Saint Saviour's Southwark, or the Unitarian Chapel in Stamford Street (the Doric porch of which is by Rennie); the latter being a "find" of my own. All that Mr. Knight's magazine told me about kindred matters, I used to revel in, and I cannot express the gratitude which to this hour I feel for the pleasure he was the means of conveying to my mind. It did me unspeakable good to be familiarised with the human body, wholly or partially unclad, as an object of beauty; and, indeed, no object of beauty ever gave me a thousandth part of the pleasure I always got from that source. Mr. Knight was a very discreet editor, and I cannot remember a Venus in all the Penny Magazine (—I missed seeing many numbers, for simple want of a penny at the time—), but, later on, there was a picture of the well-known lad extracting a thorn from his foot; and this, a perfectly naked figure, used to haunt me day and night with its beauty. The woodcuts from Raffaele and Hogarth I used to pore over with a dreamy sense that some day I should understand them both.

If I were to go on for ever so long I could say nothing stronger of my own debt to the late Mr. Knight, than I have done in saying that I cannot even conceive my own mental history without his delightful Penny Magazine in the back-ground. There might be for such a periodical,—“an image of the mighty world,”—a much larger public now than there was then; but there is no Mr. Knight. He was, in truth, a very peculiar man. His mind was one that easily fell into step with “whatever was going forward;” indeed, too easily, so that there was something secondhand about his opinions and his enthusiasms. I have never looked into his Shakspeare because of my deep sense of this second-handness of his nature; I knew very well by the instinct of *my* nature that when I came to Charles Knight as a critic and thinker, I should find too frequent signs of intellectual malleability; of too great readiness to run down into prepared or (so to speak) foregone moulds of thought. And I would rather not know this too vividly and too largely of a benefactor, especially as I am so constituted as to be peculiarly intolerant of all forms of what I call intellectual untruthfulness.

Yet it was this very quality, this (shall I call it?) neutral docility of Charles Knight's mind which made him such a capital editor of a periodical like the “Penny Magazine,” and actually qualified him for being the benefactor to me that he really was. “The image of the mighty world” could not so easily paint itself upon a canvas already filled with form and colour, however great might be the man's power of washing himself out. Take the Messrs. Chambers—they are very catholic editors, but their creed, with all its main positions and negations, shows quite sharply through all the multifarious and many-coloured pattern-work of their different periodicals and books. You know exactly what they think of Christianity, Utilitarianism, Art, Science, Government, and Political Economy. Take, again, Mr.



Alexander Strahan, another public benefactor in the same direction ; there is no mistaking his editorial workmanship, let him edit what he will, and let him be as catholic as he will. Of Charles Knight, little or nothing escaped into Charles Knight's editing, except a sort of catholic liberalism that never forsook the popular side, while it never committed itself in any form of religious or political antagonism. Hence his Penny Magazine was just what I wanted, living as I did in the midst of an exceedingly narrow and intense religious life, and being incredibly shy of putting my head out of my "cabin'd loop-hole" to look about me in search of knowledge. It will surprise most of my readers to learn that besides the profound and scholarly objection to this periodical on account of its tendency to make little boys desultory, it was objected to by most of my friends as having "no savour of the things of God." You must know my parents and friends thought that, for instance, Thomson's Seasons, including, or rather especially, the Hymn at the end of it, was decidedly a dangerous book. "Mere morality" was a very bad thing indeed. So was a general argument of the goodness of God. I never heard any verdict pronounced on the Diana or the Apollo or the Crouching Nymph, or the naked Boy extracting a Thorn ; and in spite of my belief in Cupid as "a visible god," I do not suppose there was ever much fear among my friends that I should come to believe in Jupiter or Venus, any more than in Baal or Ashtaroth. But there *was* more danger in one case than the other ; and what might have been the consequences if my parents had in any degree apprehended the sweet tumults that I got out of a beautiful form ! In spite of the piety and the strict life of my friends, I not unfrequently heard things said about the human body and its functions which filled me with loathing. I perfectly remember them to this hour, and can *now* assign them to their proper place in the history of the wretched tradition which, for one thing, had the effect pointed out by Mr. Galton, that in the dark and early middle ages if a man or woman was a little better than usual, he or she was particularly liable to be devoted to celibacy, so that the continuation of the race rested mainly with scamps and indifferently proper persons. This passing comment will be enough (for those who care to think a little) to indicate one particular in which Mr. Knight's magazine was of value to me,—I got, without knowing it, just the sympathy which I wanted in certain particulars, a sympathy without which my life must have been stunted,—a little. I cannot write *very much*, for my course has been always so much against the stream, and I have always had such a natural gift for refusing to be "influenced" intellectually till the thing claiming to influence me has produced its intellectual passport or justification, that I don't believe any circumstance of the kind I have named would have made much difference in me.

In the last part of "Middlemarch," George Eliot records that Will



Ladislaw "became an ardent public man, working well in those times when reforms were begun with a young hopefulness of immediate good which has been much checked in our days." This hints at a topic on which I have much to say, but it also recalls some comments made by Mr. Strahan (in the *Contemporary Review*) upon the recent history of periodical literature. Mr. Strahan remarked, I think, that the hopes of Mr. Knight and his coadjutors that the good literature would drive the bad out of the field had not been confirmed by the event, for that we had even now a very large crop of bad literature. It is a curious subject, and not the least curious portion of it is the fact that the titles and models of some of our worst periodicals have come from America,—that land of national education, free institutions, and diffused popular culture. On the other hand, my impression is that the "cheap press" of Germany is very wholesome. But I would not dare to generalise on so slender a basis of knowledge as I possess. It seems as if the market for cheap literature must be governed, like some other markets, by the fact of the immense multiplication of the lower types of readers. However, we will not pursue that subject.

AN IRRECONCILEABLE.

## AFTER THE NIGHT—DAY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE ROSE GARDEN."

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ONE of the prettiest quaintest towns in Germany lies between civilization and a great forest. It is close to the railway, so close indeed that it forms a striking feature in the landscape. Dusty travellers who have hurried up the Rhine, and stopped to breathe perhaps at Heidelberg and been fascinated with Baden-Baden lying in its green flowery hollow, and then, journeying southwards in the sober-paced train, have watched the spire of Strasburg, a little finger on the flat horizon, moving on and on with them beyond fields and flats, maize and colza, and the patient women hoeing and digging—turn with a feeling of refreshment to the pretty brown town lying under a background of hills, the open spire of its cathedral more beautiful in form and colour than Strasburg itself. They look out of the windows, and shake the dust from their clothes, and feel a half-wistful longing to stop at the hotel which peeps invitingly at them from amidst the pretty houses embowered in trees. But it is not many that follow the impulse. The Alps are calling them; they are under the dominion of that strange sweet attraction which is almost irresistible in its force; they shut their eyes, and see mysterious forms half hidden in unearthly vapour, snowy crowns, paling and reddening in the sunset, silent ice-caves; they smell already the scent of the pine-trees that throw long shadows on the mountain slopes; they gather gentians, and brown orchis, and divine forget-me-nots, and drink silvery water that comes dashing along the little wooden troughs. The Alps are calling them, and there is no stopping for those who have given their hearts to those mighty masters, not even here at the pretty brown town with its forests and its hills; they settle themselves once more in dusty corners, and the train pants and plods on to meet the rushing Rhine at Basle.

It was not very long ago, however, not so long that even in this hurrying and eventful age the summer is forgotten, that the stream of travellers which had been setting in, became suddenly checked. Rumours had grown too persistent for any except the most adventurous spirits to care to put possible contingencies and a probable amount of inconvenience between themselves and home. The trains that laboured backwards and forwards along the Rhine frontier land, carried heavier burdens than happy people escaping to snow peaks and glaciers. There was a stir, not only in the garrisons but out in the fields, for the men who worked there were soldiers like the rest,

some not having completed their three years service, and others who had done so forming part of the reserve force, which was liable to be called out in case of need. At this particular town the stir was especially noticeable, its position being sufficiently near the probable front to arouse considerable excitement and agitation, and its very danger naturally producing a patriotic enthusiasm, which in any other cause might have been lacking in the old dominions of Austria towards their new Fatherland.

As yet, however, the stir had chiefly consisted of active military preparations in the *caserne*, and in talk of all possible and impossible things among the people. Especially, as might be guessed by any one at all acquainted with human nature, much was discussed at the market, and political problems were solved there with an ease which might have excited the envy of the readiest diplomatist. It was a pretty sight at all times, that market, and with the fresh morning sun pouring upon it, nowhere in Germany could a brighter or more picturesque scene have been found. The *Platz* is large; in the centre and, except at its east end, altogether detached from crowding houses, stands the cathedral, with its exquisite fretted spire, its warm colouring, and its three guardian statues looking down from their tall pillars. There is an old *Kaufhaus* on the south side of the *Platz*, built of the same red sandstone, with dark shades about it where age has saddened the tints; and it has arches and carved balustrades, two quaint little side towers with odd-coloured tiles, red and green, like the sheen on a dolphin's back, and then a deep roof out of which look little dormer-windows. Besides these greater points of interest there are a hundred lesser ones; the houses thrust out angles with irregular one-sided projections, and Virginian creepers hang from their balconies in long streamers; the vine-clad *Schlossberg* rises softly behind, and with the gay moving crowd of market people about the old buildings, there is an absolute feast of colour for the eye. Under the very shadow of the outstretched gargoyles are stuck little homely awnings; but somehow, the stir and the chatter and the shifting figures do nothing but add to the silent glory of the great church. The women sit and knit with their baskets piled round them, vegetables and strawberries and little hard plums; here and there is a great umbrella pitched like a tent to keep off the sun, little hand carts stand on end, a soldier with his spiked helmet makes a glittering point between the red head-kerchiefs, and occasionally there strolls leisurely by a group of peasants in the out-of-the-world costume of the neighbouring forest.

The rumours of war flying about invested the spiked helmets with an unusual interest. There were some people standing just under the central statue, with the great west door of the cathedral behind them, and in front a short street opening out of the *Platz*; a man, one or two old women, and a fair-haired girl, who was not much attending

to their talk, and who had a rosy red kerchief on her head, a green skirt and full white sleeves as far as the elbows. For a moment, as the cathedral door swung open, she stood in strong relief against the dark shadow, the sun was shining on her, and she put up her hand to shade her eyes as she looked eagerly down the little street. Nobody noticed what a pretty picture she made, or would have thought much about it if they had seen it, for Vefele Bürklin was as well known in the market as half the other women who were buying and selling and chattering with voices that sometimes touched you strangely by a sort of sad pathetic cadence. The two old women and the man were talking and pointing to a soldier or two, but they had an eye for business all the while and to the baskets at their feet. Perhaps they were a little glad that Vefele's thoughts were elsewhere, for people came up and bought, and there was the girl looking up the street and entering into no competition.

"Age first," said the eldest of the three when her companion touched her and pointed with a little compunction. "There is time yet for a girl like her."

Ah, yes, and other things, too, that come with time!

But presently Vefele shook herself, turned round, looked at the baskets and then at the women's faces.

"So!" she said, with a flush of indignation and a little petulant stamp, "when one is with friends it does not do to keep one's eyes shut. Has Frau Witzel been by? And, dear Heaven, the cook from the Hof!—and I have sold nothing! You might have told me," she said sharply to the old women.

She was ready to cry, but they were very philosophic over her troubles. "Mine wanted selling as much as yours," said old Catherine, plumping down upon the step of the pillar and pulling out her knitting.

"And if it was Otto Meyer you looked for, he is there," said her companion, with an eye to an elderly housekeeper who was approaching.

Vefele just glanced up for a moment. A pretty picturesque cart drawn by a fast trotting little black cow, came quickly down the street, a man in a scarlet cap was standing up and driving. A half smile trembled on the girl's lips, though she turned her head away quickly, and revenged herself upon the old women by stepping out and intercepting the coming purchaser.

"There is no fruit like mine in the market," she said, proudly. And then there was a little wrangle about the price.

"If this terrible war comes, we must give up fruit and such luxuries," said the grave housekeeper, walking away with her prize.

"Yes, yes, trust the rich for giving up anything," muttered old Catherine, crossly.

All this time, the girl had kept her eyes to all appearance upon

the fruit, and the baskets, and the money she was counting. Nevertheless, by some odd intuition, she was perfectly aware of the movements of the little cart; knew that it had vanished under an archway overhung with the pretty green streamers of a Virginian creeper; knew that the man in the red cap had emerged again, and was striding towards the very spot where she stood; knew what greeting would follow, and yet started with the most innocent surprise when a voice said in her ear,

"Vefele!"

"Ah, Heaven, thou, Otto! Why come in such a fashion just to startle one when one thinks of other things! Three and four—three and four are seven." For a moment the girl still stood with her back turned, dropping the kreutzers from one hand to another, when, finding he did not answer, she looked round suddenly. At sight of his face, both smile and pout vanished. She caught his arm, and cried out,

"There is some misfortune, Otto, tell me!"

"No such misfortune, best Vefele," said the young fellow, with a certain would-be bravery, which at this instant was not the first feeling in his heart. "We have all got to join at once. If it were not for thee, and the father, and the mother, and the hay——"

Otto's voice broke down in a sort of sob. Vefele's face had turned white and her hands trembled.

"There will be war, then," she said after a moment's pause; "and I, God forgive me, have not prayed against it as the Herr Pfarrer told us we should——" She broke off suddenly and caught Otto's arm and tried to draw him at once into the church. "Come!" she exclaimed, imperatively; "If we were both to pray with all our hearts, and I were to promise a silver arrow to Our Lady—Come, Otto!"

"There is no hurry," said the young man, a little reluctantly.

"What shall you do with your raspberries? I am not going to sit here and sell your raspberries," grumbled old Catherine. But Vefele was not heeding. She was drawing Otto swiftly into the beautiful red-brown cathedral, and all the poor fruit and things might shrivel in the sun. At the door sat an old woman, muttering, and stretching out her hand. Vefele poured all the kreutzers she still held, into her lap. "Pray for us," she said, in an eager voice, without stopping for a moment. And then the door swung open, and the two seemed to those outside to have been swallowed up by the gloom. Perhaps there are other times when our dazzled eyes make that mistake.

Vefele lived in a little hamlet about half an hour's walk from the town. You were not actually in the heart of the great forest, but yet it ran along on either side, and there were glades, and bits of emerald

meadows, and little plots of vegetables undivided from the grass by any fence. The cattle were all in the stalls, now that the crops were growing up. The Bürklins kept a sort of country *Biergarten*. There was a church close by with an ugly spire and a clock; a little stream ran down one side of the road, and if you wanted to go at once into the *garten*—one can hardly use the English word as an equivalent in this case—a little bridge helped you to your purpose. The *gartens* are all alike. There are thick little stumpy horse-chestnuts, and sometimes lamps hanging from them, long tables underneath, people sitting, eating *kugelops*, and drinking beer in high covered *schoppens*, or perhaps fragrant coffee. Not unfrequently some one would give a ball at the Bürklins; a good honest dance, beginning at six or seven, and all over at an early hour. But no one was thinking of balls at this time. Some would have it there could be no change in the world because there was no change as yet in themselves; but others had already taken the alarm, and were flying away to places where the roar of battle should at least be more remote. You might meet mothers and wives trooping into the town along the dusty road, with chestnuts on either side, to hear the last news. And yet, there was that odd love of excitement, even of excitement full of pain, which is one of the strangest contradictions in human nature. The very mothers and wives could hardly have borne without a flash of disappointment to know that it was all at an end, and that their Karls and Bertholds were coming back peaceably to the hay-cutting, and the flax, and the colza, instead of marching along to that other harvest, which loomed up in their dreams, strange and grim.

Otto Meyer's cottage lay some distance beyond the village, and deeper in the forest. It was one of those beautiful old brown houses with deep shelving roofs, and flowers hanging out of the windows, which are built of pine, and are more like a Swiss chalet than anything else in the world. You may still see them in the forest, though they are being driven out, like other pretty things. Otto's father was a wood-ranger, and had charge of a certain district of forest land under the Herr Förster's eye: his son assisted him, and was to have been married this autumn if this separation had not come. Only one man, I think, had anything to say against it, for Vefele had the reputation of being not only the prettiest girl in the neighbourhood, but one of the most thrifty. Her mother had taught her carefully. Somehow, in these pretty country places where life seems more natural and more open to innocent influences than where men jostle each other in the great struggle for existence, we do not look for the same sordid little meannesses. But I am afraid that is only a dream of Arcadia. Our pastoral peasants develop much the same natures, after all, and Frau Bürklin could have held her own, and perhaps a little more than ought to have been her own,

against any woman you could have brought to bargain with her. Vefeled had been brought up in this school, and although the girl's character was sweeter and truer than her mother's had ever been, there was a certain housewifeliness inherent in her which responded only too readily to the maxims which had been preached ever since the time when she was a little fair-haired girl, running out to the guests with bunches of cherries in her fat hands. There was no better market-woman than Vefeled, and she alone, of all the family, almost succeeded in satisfying her mother.

There are things in this world of God's, which sometimes seem to us like sad problems—too sad and strange for us—sorrow, and parting, and death; but we may know some day that but for them the greatest and divinest part of us would have never started into life. Life had been to Vefeled, hitherto, chiefly a place for buying and selling, for rearing poultry, and settling bills, and gaining a character as a notable housemaiden. It was all to be very much the same over again when she had married Otto, and so things were to go on till the end of the chapter.

This sudden separation had been the first thing that had startled her.

She had seen Otto on Thursday, and on Friday morning she found it impossible, in spite of her mother's scolding, to take any interest in the question whether the calf should be driven to market at once, or be kept until it was possible that prices might be raised by a war. Vefeled, instead of joining in the discussion, stood at the window and absently twisted together some sprays of ivy that was growing from a pot round the inside of the window. The rosy red kerchief was taken off, and you could see the pretty shining coils of brown hair.

"The girl's a fool!" exclaimed Frau Bürklin, angrily, when she had three times demanded how calves were selling and received no answer. "Vefeled, I say, Vefeled!"

"If the *jungferle* has lost her ears, you are determined all the world shall know you keep your tongue, Frau Bürklin," coolly said a new comer, who walked into the little inn at this moment. He was a big, handsome young fellow, with frizzly brown hair, and an eye like a hawk; and as he spoke he unfastened a belt from his shoulders, flung it on the table, and shook himself like a dog. "What is the matter with Vefeled?"

"That is no concern of yours, and neither here nor there," said the housemother, with red cheeks, and a readiness for battle. "If you are so quick to ask questions, you may answer a few at the same time. Perhaps you will tell me how honest folk are to live in these days? Here are Hans and Johann both called out."

"Live?" answered the young man, carelessly, "that's a matter you've had a longer experience in than I. When I was here last you told me they were worthless good-for-nothings."

"So I said, and so I say now," shrilly asserted Frau Bürklin. "But if they take the good-for-nothings, think what are those they leave, and that is the reason you are here yet—*ja, wohl; ja, wohl*; have patience; I am coming!"

She ran out, and the young fellow leant with two hands on the table, and looked a little wistfully at the girl, although he could see nothing of her face, and only the shining coils of hair. "Vefe!" he said presently, in an altered voice, "Vefe!"

"Well?" she answered, shortly, without turning round.

"Are you still angry? Will you speak to me?"

"Not if you talk as you did last time."

"I'll not, I swear I'll not."

"Then say what you want."

"But I want you to speak to me."

"I am speaking, am I not?"

She flashed round upon him at these words a face very unlike its usual bright good-humour. Something glistened in her eyes, and Vincenz was at her side in a moment.

"You are crying, heart's beloved—what ails thee?" he cried out with a tender impetuosity, holding out his arms as if he half-hoped she might fall into them. But Vefe repulsed him with a still more impetuous movement.

"This is how you keep your word, then; the word you gave only a minute ago!" she said angrily.

"But I did not see you were in trouble," pleaded the young fellow earnestly.

Vefe had no softness in her heart for him, in spite of his good looks; it was to her only an aggravation of her trouble that he should be there, that he should even try to comfort her. It is not always when we love that we are most patient with other love to which we can give no return, though it seems at first sight as though it must be so. She would not so much as grant him a kind glance, and at this moment little Lenchen, the servant, came flying in breathless:—

"Is it true, then, that war has been declared, and already one battle fought?"

Vefe started, both the girls were gazing open-eyed at Vincenz.

"War has been declared," he said; "I was on the other side of the forest and have lost two days, and now I am on my way to join as fast as I can."

Lenchen ran quickly out of the room to report the confirmation of her news; Vincenz fixed his eyes imploringly upon Vefe with an expression which seemed strangely at variance with the man's whole bearing. Would she have no kind word for him even now?

But though his tidings had evidently increased her distress, she did not take any notice of them, so far as they concerned himself. The neglect stung him to the heart.



"So the neighbours may all go and get shot as fast as they please, it remains the same to you, *jungferle*?"

"Oh, no," said the girl simply, "it is because of the war that I cry."

"But not that I am in it?"

"Why should I cry for that?" she said in an indifferent voice. "I am sorry for the old mother, but you will come back, and she will be happy again."

A sudden change passed over his face as she spoke, the wistfulness died out of his eyes, and a certain fierce passion blazed in them.

"I know, I know what it means," he said, setting his teeth and speaking thickly; "you will think of no one but that dolt Otto."

The words died away into something like a curse.

They were Vefele's eyes that flamed now. She turned and faced him and said deliberately, "You are right. I, who am Otto's betrothed, think of Otto from morning till night. Never before have I thought enough, as I know now. Why do you dare to come here and speak of him to me, you, who are not worthy to live in the same earth!"

"I loved you before he did," Vincenz answered with a sort of dogged persistence.

"You persecute me with what I do not want. Go your way, Vincenz Losinger," said the girl, scornfully.

The young man stood still for a moment as if her disdain had raised a storm which almost choked him. His face was changed; big veins started out of his forehead; there was an indescribable rage in his eyes. He strode to the table and snatched up the cap and belt he had thrown there.

"*Ade*, then, Vefele Bürklin, with the heart of stone," he cried passionately; "you are not the first woman that has driven a man to something worse than death—and for your Otto, do you know that we are in the same regiment?—do you know that I hate him?—do you know that you have given him the worst enemy that he ever had in his life——?"

Like other women her passion broke down utterly before the mighty storm which she had raised; he had not finished his disjointed words before Vefele was pale, trembling, and terrified. She was too stupified to move, and as he turned at the door to fling her one last look of rage, he saw her standing motionless, as he saw her for ever afterwards in his dreams, the pretty young figure in the dark dress and full white sleeves, standing up against the window, the light shining on her fair hair, the ivy wreath setting her as it were in a frame, and outside the background of green chestnuts. She stood breathing quickly, with her lips a little apart and her eyes strained. Suddenly she cried out, and ran from the room into the *garten*. There were two or three men sitting and smoking double-headed pipes under the trees, and one of them called to her to bring

them some beer. Vefele heeded nothing : she ran out of the little gate, and across the bridge, and into the road, where half-a-dozen children had got some sticks and were playing at soldiers.

"Have you seen Vincenz?" she asked, breathlessly, looking up and down the road.

"Is it Vincenz Losinger, *mädele*?" said the little corporal, coming forward, and saluting politely. "He is gone that road to the town with long steps like this—war is declared; we must all fight. We defend the Rhine," he explained, pointing to the little stream.

The children screwed up their mouths, so as not to endanger discipline by laughing, and drew up in an irregular row. Vefele, sick at heart, went back swiftly, and into the room she had left, where there were the long tables, and a few horn-handled knives, and a great stove. She sat down, and put her arms on the table, laid her head on them, and cried bitterly. In the *garten* the men had begun to sing a patriotic song, they had got Lenchen to stand and sing too. Every now and then there came from the kitchen the shrill sound of Frau Bürklin's voice still wrangling about the calf. Over Vefele's head a little hermit cuckoo popped suddenly out of his clock, cuckooed hurriedly, and was in again with the door slammed after him before there was time to draw a breath. The sun shone out softly as though there were no such things as war, and love, and jealousy in the world,—shone on the green ivy, and on the girl's pretty head, and on the fields where the corn was waving that should never be reaped, but beaten down in its innocent beauty by the heavy tramp of man the destroyer.

There were plenty of people pouring into the town as Vincenz walked towards it with fierce quick steps. Those who glanced at him avoided him, for he was known to be a passionate man, and there was a black cloud on his face, darker than the cloud which seemed to be everywhere, except on the pretty brown town itself. This was looking its brightest. Broad sumach leaves glistened in the sun, the mountain ash was becoming scarlet, there were wreaths of clematis, gay flower boxes with open rails sticking out here and there in the streets, hanging pots with patches of crimson and blue, oleanders, and tame little vineyards running along at the backs of some of the houses. The streets were full of excited people; women hurried sadly by with faces of mute misery; a soldier would be surrounded by a demonstrative group; and as the day went on the sadness seemed to increase. Words that were at first only random guesses were caught up and repeated from mouth to mouth.

"To-night!—is it possible!—*Ach, mein Karl, Gott bewahre dich!*"

There was an eager stir round the *caserne*, and the bands played inspiring airs, but there were sad hearts that could not keep time with the music, too heavy with the weight of farewells. The white

glare of the day began to soften, and to take cool tints, a little breeze fluttered, a kind of subdued brown glory stole over the cathedral, the hills behind grew purple, the sunset lights died away behind the Schönberg, lights threw weird shadows, the old archways made points of blacker blackness in the night. Out in the little country *Biergarten* everything was still, except Frau Bürklin scolding Lenchen to bed, when a woman came hurriedly in.

"If you wish to see your Otto again, Vefele, come at once. It is war—they march this night," she said, bursting into sobs.

"This night?"

"This night, the poor fellows! Otto is breaking his heart, and I promised him you should stand where the light should fall on you, as they march to the station. He could not come, for none have been allowed to go beyond a certain distance. Oh, such a day as we have had! And they say we are all in the greatest danger."

Even Frau Bürklin was stunned for the moment. As for Vefele she caught the woman's arm and drew her quickly into the road. The two hastened along too breathless and too agitated to speak.

In the town the outward signs of excitement were dying away. The farewells were over, the *rappel* was beaten very late, but it was beaten at last, and the men were back in their barracks by eleven, the doors at the back securely fastened, and the front guarded by the general himself, who seated himself there to prevent any more partings that night shaking the mettle of his men. Two hours later the regiment was drawn up before the *caserne*. It was a dark, moonless night, heavy with clouds, here and there pierced by trembling stars. Scarcely a man but had that day parted from his nearest friends, the very boys had glory, and love, and a hundred conflicting things pulling at their heart strings, and what added tenfold to the struggle was that no one dared to think to what he might be leaving his dear ones, since the town seemed especially exposed to the invader. So they stood there in the darkness, a stern silent mass of men. One voice broke the silence—the general's. He did not say much; but he asked them if they would swear fidelity to their flag, and suddenly every sword leapt from its sheath, every right hand was raised, a deep "*Ja!*" rolled out from every mouth. They heard it for half a mile round, it was said afterwards, the sound was so sudden, so simultaneous. It died away as quickly, and then began the dead thud of the silent march, unbroken, except by the sharp sob of some miserable woman.

Not far from the entrance to the railway station a lamp stands at a corner, and there Vefele and her friend stationed themselves, and waited wearily. Sometimes another shadow as sad as they would pass by; but there were not many people in the streets at that time of night. It seemed to them as if they must have stood there all night, when at last they heard that shout, and then the dull sounds

coming nearer and nearer, until presently the light caught the first faces, and the dark uniforms with the little line of scarlet brightening them. There was something strangely overpowering in this solemn night-march, its silence, its regularity, its intense gravity. The women trembled and shrank, and then Vefele gave a little cry. Otto was close to them, his fair, rather heavy, German face changed, eager and sad at the same time, and in the rank immediately behind marched Vincenz Losinger. They all came out of the darkness, and were in it again at once. Otto had only time to wave and smile, Vincenz did not see her, but she was quick to notice the settled blackness in his face. Vefele shuddered. The French were nothing; all her terror henceforth was to lie in the grim figure keeping step by step behind the fair-haired young soldier, as though he were dogging his footsteps—in the echo of the words which rang always in her ears: "Do you know how I hate him? Do you know what an enemy—" Tramp, tramp, tramp, went the heavy steps rising and dying away, Otto and Vincenz, Otto and Vincenz, the two men close together whom it seemed to her a hundred miles would scarcely have been sufficient to divide.

It was all quiet at last. There is a little *platz* in the town at the back of the Kaisers Strasse; the street runs down one side, the corner house is overhung with creepers, and two sides are taken up with a monastery and the cloisters belonging to it. In the centre, with trees planted all round, a statue crowns a fountain,—a statue of a monk with a fine earnest face. There is always a sort of quiet about the little *platz*, and yet a brown-cowled Franciscan, passing back that night from some errand of mercy, stopped before the statue and shook his head. And, to tell the truth, if men's memorials should be raised in fitting places, to one who had seen that day's work there must have been something discordant about the peacefulness and the cloisters and the quiet night, and the figure of Berthold Schwartz, inventor of gunpowder. "*Auferens bella usque ad finem terre.—Vacate et videte quoniam ego sum Deus,*" muttered the Franciscan crossing himself. In a moment or two he went on, a dark picturesque shadow, and the little *platz* was left as silent as death, with its ghostly figure in the midst.

Events passed so quickly in the autumn of that year of which I am speaking, that those who looked for successes and reverses, marches and counter-marches, and the alternations of a great campaign, found their breath taken away by the sudden smiting down of what at first presented such a formidable front. But there were others to whom nothing would have seemed quick. When there are personal fears and anxieties tormenting you, hours and days lose all proportion and stretch into endless weariness, and there is a horrible hunger for tidings in which people seem to live a lifetime, though it may be but

a week or fortnight at the most. And all this time the little homely things which, after all, are the strongest in the world, continue. Come parting, come sorrow, come death, they go on and on, a daily round which makes a treadmill for some, but which has to be trodden though it be with bleeding feet. Vefelee, poor child, was working away at her treadmill, which once had seemed all she wanted in this life; now she would look round her and wonder vaguely that the trees were still green, the flowers blossoming, as if it were impossible that summer had not by that time passed and winter come. Perhaps it was worse for the people of that place than for others. They lived, as it were, upon the very edge of the strife, they could hear the distant boom of the guns about Strasburg and Breisach, wounded men were brought back to be nursed or buried, they had the ghastliness without the excitement of war. Sometimes the cathedral was full of praying figures. There were the stately columns springing up towards softly rounded arches, niched saints looking down from where men had set them as it were to bestow perpetual benedictions, underneath the shifting crowd. Perhaps music would peal out, a service be recited; perhaps you might come in and find a strangely impressive silence broken only by the scrape of a chair, an irrepressible sob, and then the distant dull boom. Many never forgot that silence which was filled with something they could not explain. There were the distant guns and the distant dying, and heaven overhead both here and there.

A house in an airy part of the town was fitted up for the wounded, the old *Kaufhaus* was full of stores, and the women were hard at work, scraping lint, and pulling cross threads out of little squares of linen. As each convoy arrived Vefelee would picture Otto shot down and bleeding. Yet always it was not the common enemy she dreaded, but the one enemy close behind him, the relentless face at his shoulder. She would trudge through the forest to where Vincenz' mother lived, and carry with her a little pathetic offering, as if thus she could propitiate Vincenz. Her mother would scold by the hour when she knew what the girl had done, and the old woman, who detested her boy's love, had never so much as a good word, but yet Vefelee gathered a few crumbs by her walk, and hoped that Vincenz would hear of it and relent. And every now and then a letter from Otto would come like something better than sunshine.

So time went on, although to some it seemed so slow, the vineyards were stripped of their fruit, autumn passed, winter followed, Paris was invested, Strasburg yielded, and in the glow of victory the people began to cease to fear for their own safety. Yet the better instructed knew that their danger was very far from being at an end, for the fiercest struggle was going on at the very point which threatened the town, and it was the 14th *corps d'armée* containing their own regiment, which had the work to do round Belfort, with so great an

extent of territory to protect, that constant marches and counter-marches made it very hard to gain certain news of them. Their hardships were great, the winter was intolerably severe, and at times the Germans were starving, for their carts could not come up to them. Every now and then would arrive a letter from a comrade: "Your man is dead. It was the cold and hunger that did it. He bids you kiss the little ones." The tragedies came like this in a simple fashion, and commonplace enough, alas! that winter, and the children cried, poor little souls, more because the mother cried than because death was to them a thing worse than absence.

Meanwhile the cold grew fearfully intense. The women, plodding in from the farms through deep snow, thought with terror of their husbands, sons, lovers, exposed to its pitiless force; but they had no fear that the tide of victory might turn, like those who better understood the position of affairs. For the strife was concentrating at Belfort, Bourbaki was hastening to its rescue, there was heavy fighting, the sortie had met with a certain amount of success, and if the Germans were forced to retire, the French would probably push across the frontier, and the pretty brown town, now white with snow, would lie at the mercy of the invader. The decisive battle lasted for three days in the middle of January, and perhaps it was that very thought that saved them after all, for at a critical moment one of the regiments wavered, and an officer shouted that if they gave way the homes they loved would be the first to fall into the hands of the enemy. "And so," said a young fellow afterwards, "when we heard that, we shook hands and swore we would beat them or die." The battle was won, as we all know now, but those who were waiting with sick hearts could only listen and pray when they heard the faint far-away sound of some mighty explosion reverberating dully among the mountains.

At no time during the war were tidings so looked and longed for in this particular town as in the time that followed the cessation of the cannonade. At no time either did they seem so slow in arriving. But when they came at last, though people could look round at their homes with an old strange sense of peaceful security, there were terrible pangs to be undergone, for it became quickly known that the regiments of the little duchy had suffered severely, and that the victory was dearly bought.

No letter at all came to Vefele or the Meyers. The girl hoped and hungered day after day, and every night the heavy weight which the morning had lightened came back with a dull persistency. For in the morning, and especially in the beautiful keen vigour of a spring morning, when we are young, it seems impossible that good news should not come. Every night the hope faded away and left her miserable. She went about her work as if she were walking in her sleep, the mechanism of habit having sufficient force to carry her through it after a fashion; but she sometimes looked back and mutely

wondered what her old self had been. Something she had gained at least. Life never more to her could be a thing only of eating and drinking, buying and selling: she had learnt that there were better victories than those gained by hard bargains; trouble itself seemed more endurable than the petty meanness which contented itself with so poor an aim, and sorrow had led her, as it will lead us all if we will accept its true teaching, to a higher level than that on which she had stood before.

At last, as the days wore on, and this strange foreboding silence remained unbroken, she set out one morning to see old Gretchen Losinger. It was cold dreary weather, rain was falling, and winter seemed to have stepped suddenly back amongst them, but Vefele chose the day as one on which there was likely to be little doing at the little inn. She had a huge umbrella, under which no rain could reach. She walked hurriedly, and yet any one who knew the girl would have detected a certain heaviness in her step, unlike its usual spring. More than once she shivered at the dreary swirl of the wind among the pines, and the grey pall that spread itself over the cheerless sky, and when she reached the Losingers', the old black-timbered house, standing in the midst of a desolate garden, looked so grimly forbidding that her heart sank even lower than before. Old Gretchen was at the door under the wooden overhanging balcony, a harsh, melancholy figure, making no sign of welcome as the girl came timidly towards her. A dog by her side began to growl.

"Good-day, Vefele Bürklin," said the old woman in her discordant voice; "what brings you here this fine weather? Is your fine lover made Herr Hauptmann?—or has he, perhaps, run away, and left better men to be shot like dogs?"

"Where is Vincenz?" asked Vefele, trembling.

The old woman did not at first answer, but her very silence was fierce. A little idiot boy, the child of a dead daughter, ran out, caught hold of his grandmother's apron, and made hideous grimaces at the visitor, who was still standing in the pouring rain. Presently old Gretchen broke out angrily,—

"He is lying with a shot through his leg, and the typhus at his pillow. That pleases you, no doubt?"

"I am sorry," faltered the girl. "Did he—Vincenz—write himself?"

"Do men write when they are as I tell you? Joseph Witzig wrote."

"And, oh, dear heaven, did he not say what had become of Otto?" cried Vefele, clasping her hands.

"What is Otto to me that he should waste his words? This is not the house for you to seek tidings of your Otto. I have told you already where he is—he has run away."

"You are a wicked woman!" cried the girl passionately, and then



she remembered what her passion had done, and checked herself. Great tears stood in her eyes, she looked reproachfully at Gretchen, and without a word turned round and went back as she had come through the dripping forest. She felt that she could never again try this resource, and blamed herself for having irritated the old woman, whose rough words grew out of a kind of warped affection for her son. "There is nothing now left but patience," said poor Vefele to herself. And, alas! that was the hardest of all.

The Meyers themselves, the old father and mother to whom Otto was so much, appeared to her strangely apathetic. She did not realise that as life goes on there dies out of it that feverish haste to know everything—even the worst—and a lesser hope contents us. Nor indeed was their anxiety sharpened by the sting of which she was conscious.

They wrote letters, you may be sure; two or three to Otto, and one to Joseph Witzig, and another to a second townsman, Karl Schmitt, but the regiments were marched about rapidly after Belfort surrendered, and no answers came. Then there was an armistice, and still the 14th *corps d'armée* was not included. Vefele thought her misery was as endless as the days. At length peace was proclaimed, and towards the end of March the towns-people heard suddenly that the regiment which had gone out from them so many months ago was coming back.

Sorrow and joy have a strange sympathy in their deepest tones. No one who looked at the pretty picturesque town on that spring-day could have very well guessed what ashes and tears lay behind the flags and the brightness with which it had decked itself, for everything was fresh and delightful; the breeze that came across from the pine forest set all the young leaves rustling; a hundred colours, ugly and beautiful together, made delicious pictures in a moment. The enthusiasm had commenced the day before, when one regiment marched through, but they were Wurtembergers and had their special welcome elsewhere. These that were coming belonged almost to a man to the town and the surrounding districts; the peasants poured in in their quaint bright dresses, girls had been at work for hours weaving wreaths of evergreens, stripping the poor laurel bushes, or shaping ivy to imitate it, bells were ringing, guns firing, everywhere there was a joyful bustle, the most catching boisterous gaiety. The *biertens* were crowded, gold and silver fish swam merrily in their little grottoes, coloured lamps were being hung ready for an evening illumination, on all sides were portraits of the King and the Crown Prince, photographs of telegrams, bearded men with the words "Saviours of the Fatherland," written underneath in big letters—the flashing colours, the mad joy was almost bewildering. And still there were such sad faces, such sad hearts!



Little pathetic groups, that had somehow got into the glad tumult, as if they, too, had a part in the triumph, and yet went drearily about from point to point with strange sunless faces. There was one woman in black, with a child clinging to her apron, who was hanging up a garland and a bit of striped cloth. The neighbours watched her with a kind of reverent pity, but she hung them up, and then went away, poor soul, out of the light and glare.

All the houses in the suburbs had made themselves gay, but the noise, colour, and brilliancy culminated in the Kaisers Strasse. The soldiers would enter the town by the Martini Thor—which the fathers of many of them had defended against the regulars in '48—pass under a triumphal arch, erected for the occasion, and march the whole length of the Kaisers Strasse to the *caserne* in the Karl Platz. Here it was, therefore, that as the hours passed on, the moving multitude gathered, lined the streets, thronged the windows, and watched impatiently for the first intimation of the approach of the troops. When at length there fell upon their ears a sort of dull hoarse roar, that was caught up and brought nearer, and swelled into a tremendous cheer, the excitement became almost intolerable. Women burst out crying, men turned and wrung strange hands thrust out to them in that moment of unity; heads craned from the windows as with the cheering there began to mingle the tramp for which so many ears were listening. Even the sad faces lit up. "They are coming!" "I see them!" "Father is coming! father is coming, little Maria! Ah, dear Heaven, Herr Doctor, let the children stand in front that he may see them."

Yes, they were come. Three thousand men, as many or more as marched away, but not all the same. If only those had come in that went out, and there had been left a gap for each man who had been shot down, or smitten by typhus, it would have been a ghastly entry. But the gaps do not remain unfilled in war, or anything else, except in the hearts of some people, and so three thousand marched along, and the sun shone merrily, and the regiment looked like a moving mass of green, for the men had twisted green leaves round their helmets and guns, and stuck branches in the barrels. As for the excitement it had reached a point when even the sense of discipline failed to exercise a check. Such showers of bouquets, of wreaths, of cigars came flying from the windows, that the air was literally darkened, the men caught them on their bayonets; the dust, the weapons, and the cool sweet flowers made a strange medley, and the people closed up behind until the dark mass in the midst was almost lost in the surging, cheering crowds, who in their enthusiasm were catching at the men's hands, and wringing them as they passed.

So the drums beat, and the bells jingled, and the flags waved, and hearts were full, although it was not all joy. The woman who had hung up her little tribute of colour had fled away to one of those

attics which peep out of the steep brown roofs with quaint windows like eyes, flung herself down, and held her hands tight against her ears, and there was the child pulling at her gown, and crying to go to father. And Vefele and the old Meyers stood in the street just where it opens down towards the cathedral. I think the girl would have fled away too, if it had not been for the old people, for the certainty for which she had cried out, now that it was at hand, seemed unbearable. But the father and mother stood with a grave patience which kept her from any outbreak, waiting not being so unfamiliar to them as to her, and knowledge being so near.

And as through dim eyes she began to see that dark gleaming body making its way up the Kaisers Strasse, as the gay crowd pushed forward, and wavered, and tossed their wreaths, a wild hope suddenly seized Vefele. Why should she be left outside this joy? Why had she despaired? Why had she not a nosegay to fling with the rest? Why might she not see the dear face looking at her with loving eyes—have her bliss, her moment of compensation? Alas, such a hope was more terrible than all hopelessness. Her lips parted, her eyes devoured the brown faces that marched by—surely the next moment she must see Otto! And then she started, turned pale, and thrust out her hands with an involuntary movement of repugnance. Not Otto, but the other face that haunted her, that she saw always at his shoulder, was then looking into hers. With such a passionate yearning, such a hungry longing in the sunken eyes, such an intense appeal in the whole figure, that one or two women standing by turned and stared curiously at Vefele. He had passed before she had time to do more than just put out her hands with that mute action of abhorrence, the people closed up, and she might have been swept away to the *caserne* by the shouting throng, if old Meyer had not laid a heavy hand upon her shoulder and drawn her up the little street towards the cathedral, where the *platz* was quite empty and quiet. Franz Meyer, smoking his pipe, walked on steadily with his wife, and Vefele followed as if in a dream. They turned under the arch where Otto had driven his little black cow, and where a cousin lived, who, like the rest of the town, was at this moment in the Karls Platz. The old man motioned to the women to go in.

"Wait for me here, mother," he said; "I am going to ask the neighbours about our lad. I will come back as soon as I know anything."

The wife put her apron over her head and sobbed bitterly, but Vefele could do nothing to comfort her; indeed, the girl scarcely noticed anything, or that by-and-by, as the shadows lengthened, the *platz* became full of moving figures, that there were soldiers almost carried off their legs, hurried along to *biertgartens* and banquets, that at last there was someone in the room speaking, until, becoming conscious of her own name, she looked up and saw Vincenz.

"Yes," Franz Meyer was saying; "the girl is here because she was his *braut*, and so has become in a sort one of us. You can tell your story to us three—all who are left," added the old man with simple pathos. "Vincenz was by our dear lad at the last battle, mother."

Vincenz was looking eagerly at Vefe, who after her first momentary glance had turned away, and sat with locked hands, gazing into the *platz*. Presently he took up old Franz' words—

"Yes, my comrade and I were near—there was some hard fighting going on, and our regiment had to get hold of a battery which was letting fly into us. Otto was knocked down first—then I got hit—"

The mother was crying again, but very quietly. Vefe sat unmoved. The father shook the ashes out of his pipe, passed the back of his hand across his eyes, and said,—

"So. Did our Otto speak before he died?"

"*Ja, wohl*," assented Vincenz, quickly. "It was while he was speaking that the shot came which took me——"

He stopped.

Vefe had risen, and had turned upon him a white set face, all the more terrible because of the look of youth which formed so unnatural a contrast to its misery.

"Do not believe him," she said, breathing shortly; "do not believe a word he says. Otto is dead, and this is his murderer. Do you think I have forgotten your words—do you think I can ever forget? Let Heaven forgive you, Vincenz Losinger, for I never will, nor so much as look again upon your evil face."

Was she an avenging angel as she stood there, with an awful anger flaming from her eyes? Was her accusation true that he remained stricken and speechless? Ah, it is not always truth which gives us the sharpest wounds, nor are the angels, perhaps, so swift to smite! Frau Meyer dropped her apron, and stared first at one and then at the other; old Franz shook his head and said softly,—

"Sorrow has turned her head, poor girl! Go on, Vincenz."

But he only answered by saying in a sharp voice of anguish,—

"Vefe—I swear to Heaven——"

"Do not swear," she interrupted; "do not make your sin more horri'le. Father, mother, I am going—I cannot breathe in the same room with this man."

She went away from the midst of them without another glance at him. The old mother put out her hand, and caught feebly at her gown as she passed, but the girl gently unfastened her hold, and was gone. She went downstairs, and out from the dark archway into a world of white light, past happy groups that were bursting with merry laughter, under the triumphal arch where already the green boughs and the flowers drooped and hung heavily, and so, by-and-by,

into the road between the chestnuts, where the cool pine forest swept down on either side, and the glare, the noise, and the happiness were all left behind.

To outer eyes the world looked very much as it had done for years past. The men had gone back to their farms; the shop windows had their pictures of heroes, their little *Trauergedanken* for mourners; every now and then a general came to the hotel, and a sentinel or two marched up and down, and stared at the great steel globes stuck about among the oleanders in front; the *biertgartens* had perhaps more people than usual to drink coffee and eat *kugelopfs* and *gipfeln*, and Vefele and Lenchen had as much on their hands in the long summer evenings as they could manage. One evening when there were more guests even than usual, you might have noticed, had you been on the road outside, that a man had crossed the stream, climbed the opposite bank, and was leaning over the low wall which encircled the *garten*, in such a manner that while he could not easily be seen from the inside, he himself commanded a view of all that was going on. For some time he remained motionless, and apparently without seeing what he wanted, for at length he made an impatient movement as though he would turn away. At this moment, however, Vefele came to the door of the house, and stood looking out, and seeing her, a group of men who were sitting under the trees close to the watcher, held up their *schoppens* to show that they wanted more beer, and the girl came at once towards them. The face behind the wall changed, quivered, and took once more that hungry yearning look which had startled her on the day of the entry. Did nothing suggest to Vefele who was so near her? Did no sense awaken under the watching, and quicken her to hear in what sounded no more than a sighing breeze among the trees, the words, "*Ade*, heart's beloved,"? Ah, no. She stood there very quietly, her face so raised that the sunset light fell upon it, and showed the sad weary look that had grown into the sweet eyes; and then in a minute, when the men were drinking and smoking again, she turned back into the house. *Ade*, heart's beloved! *Ade*.

When morning dawned, a man who had been sleeping in a woodshed by the road side, came out, shook himself, looked for a few minutes into the distance behind him, where, with the glory of the morning light upon it, the spire of the cathedral rose up out of a brown sea of roofs, and then again set himself to walk along the white road which stretched itself interminably. The man, who had frizzly hair, and bright eyes, a little startling from the pallor of the face, limped as he walked, and used a stick as if requiring such a support. Some country people, whom he met by-and-by, struck with pity, stopped to ask if he were not ill, if he had, perhaps, fought in the war. When he told them yes, and where he had been wounded,

they looked at him with a still deeper kindness. One young girl as she went on wished him a happy home, the man hurried on a little, and tried to avoid the next salutations. The difficulty with which he walked prevented his making any great progress; but before night came, he looked back for the last time, and saw—through a mist which might not have been altogether in the air—the far-away spire like a little mark in the blue distance, and breathed once more those words which sounded like a prayer, "*Ade, heart's beloved, ade!*"

The next day's travelling and the next to that were marked by the same slow but resolute advance. He had money with him with which he was able to get food and a night's lodging among the peasants, whose thinly scattered houses he passed, and more than once, when his strength was unusually exhausted, a lift in an ox-cart. But his impatience at this slow rate of travelling prevented his often having recourse to it, and he preferred toiling on, although at an evident cost of suffering and increased weakness.

Following a road, with which he was already familiar, it was not very long before he came upon traces left by the war, and when he had crossed the Rhine into Alsace, these traces thickened and grew more heartrending, or would have done so even to an enemy, had he not been taken up with other thoughts. These occupying his mind it did not affect his pity that a general air of desolation was spread over entire tracks, that fields were uncultivated, villages in ruins, or that the people he met looked at him with an angry misery when they knew he was a German. He was simply bent upon pushing forward as fast as his failing strength would allow, and while the sight of a thaler never failed to bring him the necessaries he required, he was indifferent to the words and looks which accompanied them. Perhaps, also, these were softened by his own haggard appearance, especially with the women, who were quick to notice that old brightness of eye which had not yet deserted him.

To a certain point Vincenz had a purpose. He wished to reach the ground near Mont Vaudois, where the Germans had for three days resisted Bourbaki's fiercest assault, and where he had last seen Otto. But what should follow when he reached the place, what possible glimmer of light his coming to this field of death could throw upon the blank darkness in which the end was left, he did not attempt to think. During the campaign he had avoided Otto, feeling no sort of kindness towards him, and although the passionate words which haunted Vefeled carried no meaning to himself after the first moment, the young fellow's death had not seemed to him a great misfortune, nor the dream of winning the girl's love hopeless. He had in fact lived upon it, by sheer force of will dragging himself through the uphill work of recovery, so that he might march in with the other troops, and get, as he fancied, the first look of welcome from her

sweet eyes. So they had marched ; and when, reaching the top of a little hill, and seeing before them, far away, the spire of the cathedral, the regiment broke simultaneously into a tremendous cheer, his voice rang out again and again. Afterwards we know what came, and now there was no more left than those words—*Ade*, heart's beloved.

He had a wild dream that there was a possibility of hearing something of Otto at the place where he had been shot down. In such times it was not unusual for a mystery to hang over the disappearance of a soldier, and you might read pathetic little appeals in the local and provincial newspapers to anyone who could give tidings of such and such an one of such and such a regiment, who had not been heard of since a certain engagement : or the appeal would be to Friedrich or Hermann himself. Yet what a dream for Vincenz ! Until now he had had no thought that Otto could be alive, little enough had he now, only it seemed to him as though the very dead must rise and speak in answer to Vefe's accusation, and after all, to find him at all would be little less of a miracle. One man—a unit among hundreds—in a hostile country—a man, too, who had he been living would have made his way back without delay. If Vincenz had faced these impossibilities, he would have sunk down by the roadside long before he reached that ravine, where the pretty river with its banks trodden and defaced, ran swiftly along. But he faced nothing, except the burning desire that one day Vefe should acknowledge that he was no murderer.

Coming to the place at length and having pictured it so often to himself as he last saw it with flame and smoke belching out from the batteries and the din of three days' fighting filling the air, the quiet struck him strangely, as something unnatural and almost ghastly. Birds were whistling, the grass was waving, the sun shining peacefully, and one or two little children were scrambling up and down the banks. When they saw this shrunk and haggard figure coming down upon them from the top, they fled as fast as their legs would carry them, tumbling over each other, and uttering shrill shrieks of terror.

As for him, I think it was as he reached the spot which for these long days had been the goal he set before his feverish eyes, that the hopelessness of his dream for the first time met him face to face and crushed him. What had he dreamed ?—where should he go ?—what vain wanderings up and down that long length across which the battle had raged, could find Otto alive, or bring him up from the dead to bear witness ? A horrible sense of the inevitable choked his breath, as he stood there and looked despairingly. As his spirit failed, the weakness of his body, enfeebled by previous illness and excessive fatigue, increased. He cried out "*Otto !*" standing still and stretching out his hands as if to make one final effort, and with

the word still on his lips fell down on the bank, and lay as unconscious as though not a dead man but death itself had answered him.

That confused border land in which we grope so strangely, was so full of unknown and shifting figures to Vincenz when he came slowly back through its mists, that he gave up attempting to extricate himself. It was long before he realized that a square of white light, from which he instinctively turned, was a window; by-and-by other shapes resolved themselves into the dark figure of a priest and an ugly old woman wearing the black bow of Alsace. It added to his bewilderment to hear voices which did not belong to them.

"Where am I?" he asked, putting out his hand, "and who is speaking?"

The old woman was beginning to answer volubly, when the priest stopped her.

"You are in my presbytère at A——," he said, "and the sounds you hear are the people waiting to know your condition."

The alarm of Vincenz' approach had indeed been given by the children who had run back to their mothers and reported that the Prussians were returning. This report brought many to look, and Vincenz, had he been in health, might have had a dangerous reception; but enemy or no enemy, a man lying on his back and looking like death itself, could not meet with anything but kindness from the simple people. They lifted him carefully, and carried him to the presbytère, which had suffered less than the other buildings of their poor ruined village, and meanwhile they loitered about the door to know what the curé thought of his patient. Vincenz asked no more questions, he drank obediently some herb decoction which old Brigitte held to his lips, and lay staring at the square of white light, apparently little less unconscious than when he had been brought in. The curé was talking to Brigitte about a distribution of corn he was going to make to the half-starved people, when suddenly Vincenz sat up in bed.

"Who is there?" he asked, eagerly, lifting up his hand.

The priest hastened to calm him, to tell him again it was only the little group outside the door, half-hungry, and half-curious, and then hurried out to disperse the talkers. Meanwhile the young man gradually relaxed his listening attitude, sank back on the pillow, and said no more for the night—no more, that is, in conscious words, for through that night, and for many days, he rambled feverishly through long sentences, incoherent to the priest and the old woman, who wanted the key. And every now and then, when voices were heard outside the door, he would start again, hold up his hands, and ask in an eager whisper,

"Who is there? Is he come?"



They nursed him kindly, very kindly, considering the evil condition of the village, which, lying in the very heart of the fighting, had been taken and re-taken, battered, shelled, the cattle carried off, the crops destroyed. The curé had received from one of the funds a certain amount for distribution among his people, but they could only just keep famine from their doors, and a sick German was no welcome addition. Old Brigitte grumbled terribly until she learnt he was a Badener, but she did not nurse him the less carefully, and by-and-by it seemed as if the bright eyes that had grown so wistful, had won the old woman's warm heart.

As the fever and the old pain of his wound lessened, he would lie quietly, being very weak, and watch the flies upon the ceiling, or the little fluttering shadows that came and went across the window. Everything of the past had grown suddenly far-away and remote from his life, nor did he look very much beyond the hour. Remembering what he was in Vefe's thoughts, even that sorrow did not any longer seem unendurable; nay, he smiled softly to think for how short a time misunderstandings could last, and how surely it would all be known one day. And until then, until then, why—*Ade*, heart's beloved.

To the curé he had not said much except that he was in search of a friend, and that he had started for this purpose before his strength was re-established. He asked him also to write to his mother, but not to frighten her with a full account of his condition, and after this was done, and he had given his kind host the little store of money that remained to him, he seemed quite content to lie still and wait for what was coming.

The children who had found him had more than once peeped in at the door, and been scared away by Brigitte's scoldings or the sick man's wan face; but one evening when he was alone and smiled at them they took courage and stole in while their mothers were receiving the curé's dole. Once in, they chattered freely, running to the window to see what was going on, and breaking into shrill laughter.

"There is old Mathias," they said, "and Anna."

"Anna has the share for Fritz."

"Who is Fritz?" asked Vincenz, languidly.

The eldest little girl looked at him with her dark eyes, and said very gravely, "Fritz is an enemy, like you are. You are, for Max said so."

"I should shoot you, if I was grown-up, in a battle," said the boy staring at him from a safe distance. "Would Fritz fight for you? Old Mathias the charcoal-burner picked him up after the battle that was down there, you know. I heard the guns, but I did not mind them. Mother did, though—she cried."

"Is he called Fritz?" Vincenz said with his eyes eager. "What is he like?"



The children looked at each other. "We call him Fritz," said the girl at last. "He is ill."

"Where does Mathias live?"

"Don't you know? It is the next house. If you get up I will show you."

It did not seem a very wonderful thing to the children, but to any one else a miracle might have been before their eyes, for the sick man raised himself feebly from the bed. Little Elise ran away in terror, he looked so thin, Max advanced to assist with some pride that his advice had been followed. The old strong will had come back; Vincenz got on his clothes between gasps of terrible breathlessness. The curé standing at the door, started with horror at the touch of a pale eager ghost; and as for the women they caught at each other and crossed themselves, panic-struck. But when they heard the name that Vincenz breathed, a buzz of comprehension went round the poor gaunt figures.

"It is his brother, without doubt, and he cannot rest now that he has heard of him. These Germans have some heart, after all."

Anna, the charcoal-burner's daughter, was almost a heroine, as she and the curé helped Vincenz into the miserable hut, from which the priest would have before now removed the wounded man, had not old Mathias, with surly obstinacy, refused.

"Fritz is only a name the people have given him," said the curé; "the wound in his head has affected his memory, and they cannot make out to what part he belongs. There he is in the corner; Anna, speak to him."

Whose was the face, bandaged and sunk? Whose were the clouded foolish eyes? Not Otto's—oh, thank heaven, though his own name might never be cleared—not Vefele's Otto found here an idiot! Yes, he could thank Heaven for that.

They carried him back with great difficulty, for the effort and its result had well-nigh exhausted his feeble hold of life. The calm summer shadows were falling gently across the little bare room, the sweet evening air just stirred the blind, outside were the women talking and wondering. The grass was growing and waving where it had been trodden down, and forget-me-nots looked up from the brink of the little river. Ah, me! there are other battles fought and other victories won than those of which the world hears the noise. Perhaps the curé, who knew something of those struggles, could trace their working in the face of the dying man; perhaps, looking from him to the little crucifix upon the wall, he remembered Whose infinite help could give strength in the hour of need, for he knelt down suddenly and prayed. And then there was heard a triumphant little child's voice,—

"Here is a letter for Vincenz!"

"It is from the old mother," said Vincenz, feebly. "Read it, Herr Pfarrer."

There were two letters in one, and the curé read the first he opened.

"Oh, dear friend," it said; "all is so beautiful, so happy! Otto has come back, he has had the most heart-breaking hardships, but he is here, and thou must forgive the wicked things I said, for I know now how wrong it was, and that it was in trying to save Otto thou wast hurt thyself. Come and let us be right good friends."

The reader stopped.

"You will write, Herr Pfarrer; they are very happy, are they not?" said Vincenz, with a wistful look.

The curé was not thinking of them. Even a bystander could gather something from the little history, could guess that for them there was love and life and happiness, but for the other, the other who, through long nights of fever, had kept one dear name continually on his lips, what was there?—renunciation and death. Does it not sound sad to us? It sounded sad even to him who had just risen from his knees. And yet those words may mean love and happiness and life—not less, but, rather, more.

Through the night the curé watched, and heard in broken sentences his story. At last he only lay and listened, quietly, with a look on his face of infinite peace. The breeze had died away, the stillness was profound; a grave clear light beautified the poor battered walls, the desolate fields, the deserted batteries. Hearing something that sounded like a whisper, the curé bent down: "*Adé*, heart's beloved." That was all.

Some change struck the good priest at that moment. His little lamp was burning so dimly that, scarcely knowing the hour, he went to the window and drew back the little blind. The east was bright with bars of yellow light; everything was fresh and gleaming in the dew; gay little flowers looked brightly up from the grass and the long shadows, and a streak of sunshine fell gently across the dead man's face.

After the Night—Day!

TO Q. H. F.

SUGGESTED BY A CHAPTER IN THEODORE MARTIN'S "HORACE,"  
("ANCIENT CLASSICS FOR ENGLISH READERS.")

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I.

"HORATIUS FLACCUS, B.C. 8,"—  
There's not a doubt about the date,—  
    You're dead and buried :  
As you remarked, the seasons roll ;  
And 'cross the Styx full many a soul  
    Has Charon ferried,  
Since, mourned of men and Muses nine,  
They laid you on the Esquiline.

II.

And that was centuries ago !  
You'd think we'd learned enough, I know,  
    To help refine us,  
Since last you trod the Sacred Street,  
And tacked from mortal fear to meet  
    The bore Crispinus ;  
Or, by your cold Digentia, set  
The web of winter birding-net.

III.

We live in so advanced an age !  
Sensation tales, a classic stage,  
    Commodious villas !  
We boast high art, an Albert Hall,  
Australian meats, and men who call  
    Their sires gorillas !  
We have a thousand things, you see,  
Not dreamt in your philosophy.

## IV.

And yet, how strange ! Our " world," to-day,  
 Tried in the scale, would ill outweigh  
     Your Roman cronies ;  
 Walk in the Park—you'll scarcely fail  
 To find a Sybaris on the rail  
     By Lydia's ponies,  
 Or hap on Barrus, wiggled and stayed,  
 Ogling some unsuspecting maid.

## V.

The great Gargilius, then, behold !  
 His " long-bow " hunting tales of old  
     Are now but duller ;  
 Fair Neobule too ! Is not  
 One Hebrus here—from Aldershot ?  
     Aha, you colour !  
 Be wise. There old Canidia sits ;  
 No doubt she's tearing you to bits.

## VI.

And look, dyspeptic, brave, and kind,  
 Comes dear Mæcenas, half behind  
     Terentia's skirting ;  
 Here's Pyrrha, " golden-haired " at will ;  
 Prig Damasippus, preaching still ;  
     Asterie flirting,—  
 Radiant, of course. We'll make her black,—  
 Ask her when Gyges' ship comes back.

## VII.

So with the rest. Who will may trace  
 Behind the new each elder face  
     Defined as clearly ;  
 Science proceeds, and man stands still ;  
 Our " world " to-day's as good or ill,—  
     As cultured (nearly),  
 As yours was, Horace ! You alone,  
 Unmatched, unmet, we have not known.

AUSTIN DOBSON.

## CASIMIR MAREMMA.

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SOME years ago, I read in great haste, but with more delight than haste, a story by Sir Arthur Helps, entitled "Casimir Maremma." My recollections of the book are imperfect, but I fancy that Casimir was, on one side, of Russian parentage—what his mother was, I forget. The young man learnt a trade, and mingled with the working-classes, in order that he might really and truly know them. That he was nearly blown to kingdom-come by an infernal machine was natural—we expect that sort of thing of "the working-man." I have myself sat at tea with a well-conducted and enlightened specimen of the class, and heard him argue, women and children being present, that it was the right of the workman to kill any other workman who by superior ability or for other reasons, outbid him and outdid him in the labour-market. But Casimir Maremma was not to be daunted by infernal machines, and, as I remember the narrative, became a Captain of Emigration to the poor. He argued, and rightly, that it was a noble and becoming task for a man of means and brains to lead the surplus population from England into the wilderness somewhere, and found new societies, with the help of educated assessors,—clergymen, doctors, scientific men, and what-not. I forget if well-bred ladies formed a portion of the colonising staff of Casimir Maremma; but as they would be the best and sweetest of all assessors, and carry heaven with them wherever they went,—and as Sir Arthur Helps is a wise good man who loves women, I have no doubt noble ladies did accompany Casimir Maremma to the new outlandish land.

But what I want to know is, how many English gentlemen have taken the hint given by Casimir? A gentleman coloniser might make himself immortal on another shore by a very simple process—Saltaire and Akroydon to wit; and to found a colony, at the same time relieving this congested country of its superfluous men and women, would be a work that any man might rejoice in. Where, then, is Casimir Maremma? Miss Rye goes out to Canada with band after band of her little girls; comes back again, and takes out another; and quite right too. Now Casimir has had ample time to start his colony, and come back and carry off another batch of unnecessary persons. But I do not hear of him. Is he married out there, wherever it is, or has he this time been conclusively blown up by the grateful devices of some of those misconceiving persons who act as traps and ambushes for all that is good in this world?

It was of Casimir Maremma that I thought, when I came with a thrill of horror upon a paragraph in a newspaper, which informed me and the rest of the world, in the triumphant manner usual when such things have to be told, that somewhere near Clapham Junction—ye gods, what happy days I have had in those fields covered with *papilionaceae*, and with harebells nestling under the ferns!—a new estate, to be called the Shaftesbury Park Estate, was in course of being laid out with 1200 houses for clerks, artisans, and labourers.

“Good Heavens!” said I, half fainting, “twelve hundred houses suited for clerks, artisans, and labourers!” Where is Casimir Maremma? I can admire the enthusiasm of humanity when it leads a fellow to carry off “clerks, artisans, and labourers” by the ship-load at a time, and leave the rest of us room to breathe, but I exclaim, “More man! a plague, a plague!” when my Apemantus comes in this shape. Sir Arthur Helps has more than once lamented, like Mr. Ruskin, the monstrous growth of our great cities, with all the filth and degradation they bring with them—and well he may. But, however much he may know of “the bald-headed man in the corner of the omnibus” who stands for public opinion (he will know what passage of his works is in my mind, if he reads these lines), I will venture to say he has not a notion how entirely the bald-headed man’s ideas of human happiness and growth are wrapped up in bricks and mortar. Sir Arthur Helps is a man of means; he spends (I suppose) a very large portion of his time in the country, or within easy reach of it; and he comes but little in contact with the lower ranks of the middle class in town. His prosaic friend Mauleverer knows more about them than he does. Sir Arthur loves Nature—but does he imagine that the bald-headed man of the ’bus cares one rap for it? Or the clerk who sits at the other end of the same ’bus? I tell him, no. The bald-headed man, who has a long purse, is a speculative builder or a friend of fellows of that stamp, and the joy of his soul, the desire of his eyes, the cordial of his griefs, is to see acre after acre covered with drain-pipes and gas-pipes, on which houses are run up as fast as Irishmen can carry hods up ladders. Sir Arthur Helps is sure to know that lovely place,—at least it was lovely,—Streatham. But did he hear the evidence of the bald-headed man out of the ’bus when the Streatham tramway question was before a Committee of the House of Commons? That bald-headed man well-nigh wept, in answer to his counsel, over the slowness of building in the neighbourhood of Streatham; and it seemed to be an assumption which pervaded the atmosphere of the room that if there was one spot on earth where building was slack, Parliament should rush in with all sorts of urgencies to cover the ground with “blocks,” and set civilised savages and their squaws running to and fro like ants over nasty, dirty, noisy thoroughfares. As to the clerk, ask *him* what he

thinks of a new street in his neighbourhood. I have often asked him,—often : and Wordsworth's heart did not more ardently leap up when he beheld a rainbow in the sky than does that young man's when he espies a new public-house, or a new general dealer's. What he wants is a place close at hand, so that he can run in at a minute's notice for an extra pint of beer, or a bit of pickle ; while his wife burns in the night-watches for a new draper's hard by, whither she can repair for "a remnant" cheap. The bald-headed man of the 'bus when he goes to Hastings betakes himself to one of those great stone or stucco buildings which have done so much to transform a pretty fishing village into a hideous city by the shore, and there he leads a life as much like his town life as possible. When the clerk out of the same 'bus goes to Ramsgate, he delights in a scene like that which Mr. Frith has painted : people packed like cigars in a box, and as many sources of low enjoyment as possible to be had cheap ; beer, tobacco, and above all, opportunities of getting his vanity tickled, being the chief. Nor are we much refreshed if we turn to the children of these elevated persons. The love of nature is, perhaps, as rare in the young as in the adult human being. We read a great deal of fine writing about the pleasure children take in gathering flowers in green fields ; but the majority of them would take quite as much pleasure in picking up bits of coloured glass on a green carpet in an atmosphere of a very different quality. They are not yet *debased* like the bald-headed man and the clerk out of the 'bus ; they do not want beer and tobacco every hour or so, nor do they want paltry social stimuli of various kinds : their idea of a heavenly existence does not yet lie in packing as many houses as you conveniently can into so many acres of ground—but it will some day ; they do not show the tendencies which would lead them away from ideals of this kind. Where, indeed, should they get them from ? They must, in all reason, take after their fathers and mothers ; and that is why I inquire so eagerly what Casimir Maremma is about, and whether he is to remain a solitary specimen of his order in our "tight"—very tight, choke-tight—"little island."

I should like to make some one who has the Casimir Maremma stuff in him follow me in my hasty sketch of the change which comes over a pretty village neighbourhood as the city marches up to it, and grasps it with its nasty, dirty, greedy, tipsy, smoky paws. Picture to yourself within six miles of Pall Mall a quiet semi-rural spot—never mind names, think of Hornsey, Streatham, Wandsworth, Dulwich, Sydenham, whatever you please. Ah, the pen almost drops from my fingers, as I think of the changes that have come over Sydenham, Dulwich, Hampstead, Wandsworth, Norwood, Putney, and other places !—but let us go back to our sketch. Suppose you take a cottage in a straggling group of houses not yet formed into a street. Let us say that within fifteen yards of your door there is a

meadow, within two hundred yards a farm-house, within a mile a range of hills. Between them and you there is scarcely anything but fields and trees. Strong and fresh is the wind that comes down upon your little garden, and the sound of the wind in the boughs is joy and inspiration to you. Between you and the parts in which the houses grow thicker there are wide spaces of fields, with hedgerows and clumps of trees. Far out in that direction there is an old-fashioned inn, with gable-windows, and there are a few sleepy and most amusing shops often kept by persons of the class you call "characters"—"Really, you know, he's quite a character." The quality of the neighbourhood and the air is shown by small incidents such as this,—a couple of convalescent children whose parents wish to have easy access to them coming to a cottage under the care of a nurse for a month or two to pick up their strength; or a newly married pair coming to supplement the honey-moon by a month or two more of peace and quietness, the husband running down occasionally to make merry with his young wife, and of course staying the Saturday and Sunday with her. The weekly service at church is, oh, so celestially sleepy—it is quite a means of grace. On a work-day evening, the stillness of the neighbourhood is so perfect, so sweet, that only to think of the place when the accursed railway has once invaded the calm, is enough to madden you. About once a month you catch sight of a policeman. The postman takes his time over his rounds; he jokes with the maidservants at his own sweet will and theirs: and sometimes he forgets a letter. At last, one fine day you hear from some "d—— good natured friend" that the railway is coming. The friend is jubilant—house-property will look up, there will be rows of shops, and you will be able to get to town in thirteen minutes. You are told, with joyful pantomime, that a certain little plot of green ground on which you have many a time paused to see the boys and girls tormenting a shaggy donkey and altogether behaving in a most uncivilised manner, is going to be built upon immediately. A cry of pain escapes you, your friend is astonished—"Why, won't it be a very good thing? It's the best bit of building ground within a quarter of a mile, and what a mess they make there *now!*" That is your intelligent friend's view of the matter, and you resolve to seek sympathy no more. In an incredibly short space of time, you find some dear old houses are pulled down, and there is a mush of brickwork and timber where once there was sweetbriar and jasmine, apple-tree and mulberry-tree. The station-works go on like smoke, as your friend says. Wretched small houses are rapidly run up all around, and the neighbourhood swarms with navigators. I suppose it must be fancy (since such things take time), but it seems to me that in a few weeks there are seven-and-twenty beershops where there was formerly only one or two. An ignorant, worldly-minded literate issues circulars in which he calls attention to the



fact that the railway is now "invading our quiet village,"—those are the very words of that dear man of God,—and urges upon the inhabitants the duty of providing for the "spiritual destitution" of the population which is to be expected. By the time the population is come, the man of God has a church of his own and is a great gun in his way. Meanwhile, the plague of new houses and new shops is closing in upon you. Before you can say Jack Robinson, there is a square with two or three streets where a year before there was a meadow covered with buttercups, where you could gather the blue corn-flower and the wild thrift; and where the odour of the sweet-briar came and went upon the south wind, there is a new butter-shop with a brass band playing the "Perfect Cure" and "Oh, would I were a bird!" While the railway works are in progress drunken men and women floated up from the very dregs of town-life become familiar objects. The quiet old gabled hostelry has become a gin-palace; the streets are now noisy, dirty, obtrusive, and insolent; and, in a word, the great city has sent out its grimy fingers and by the hundred surrounded you before you know where you are.

Now somewhere in "Realmah," I think Milverton leaves the room in dudgeon because Mauleverer or Ellesmere professes to prefer works of art to human beings. But I venture to say that if Milverton, with his just horror of great cities, was to see a sight to which I could easily take him in less than an hour's drive from Pall Mall, he would admit that there is something in Ellesmere's or Mauleverer's way of taking things. It is a very common sight indeed, being nothing more or less than an English meadow, three months ago pleasant to the eye, set round with elms and hedgerows, and only occasionally trodden by a cow, a pony, a donkey, or a couple of children. But now the trees are cut down, the field is being dug into heaven knows what, and it is laid out from end to end with glazed earthenware pipes and bricks. In six months more, there will be a sight to gladden the eyes of the bald-headed man in the upper corner of the omnibus and his friend the clerk in the other corner. The meadow will be covered with houses, and the houses will be full of people. It is, of course, possible that among the tenants of these dwellings there may be a Shakspeare or a Plato, but it is very unlikely; even if there were, he would go mad in a world of gas-pipes, sanitary measures, and cads; and, in any case, Milverton himself, if the question were forced upon him, Would you rather this sweet meadow had remained as it was, a joy to the souls and a help to the lives of a few human beings who really seemed to have some *raison d'être*, or that it should be filled with huts for civilised savages, who will lead frowsy parochial lives bounded by beer and pickles, and make you wonder why on earth they came into existence at all?—I say Milverton himself might be hurried into giving an answer that would be very shocking to the

spirit of the nineteenth century, and very disparaging to the comforts and improvements of "progress":—

*Apemantus.* Here, I will mend thy feast.

*Timon.* First, mend my company; take thyself away!

Exactly. What do these people do here? What reason is there for supposing that the indefinite multiplication of forked radishes with heads fantastically carved is in itself a good thing? On the contrary, there must be a limit beyond which this swarming and crowding is an abomination—a limit founded on man's relations to the earth with regard to his subsistence, and also with regard to culture, and general well-being. It is by no means a proved, it is not a provable proposition, that the happiness of twenty thousand human creatures of a low type (which means their eating and drinking and grubbing about in comfort) is a greater and better thing than the happiness of a few human beings of a higher type. In fact, I object to this incessant bricking up and blocking in of our lives. The earth was not built to be torn to pieces and made nauseous with gas-pipes and drain-pipes. "But you are here yourself, I suppose, and we have as much right to be here as you are!" Ah, that is the question. *I am* here; possession is nine points of the law; and I shall, of course, fight for my advantages. "And you have children." Yes, I have, but if I had foreseen the turn things are taking, I would never have had them. As they are here, however, I hope one or two of them will take to the Casimir Maremma line; will *not* think it clear that an improvement is effected when park or forest is cut up to grow wheat for cads; and will recognise that there are two ways of dealing with all such difficulties. "This stool is too high," said the lawyer's fag; "you must get another." But his master replied, "Not at all, I shall get a shorter clerk." Is it true that the land in Britain will not feed and house the people, unless we take something from its beauty, its wildness, its selectness of aspect here and there? Then let us get a shorter population. Let Parliament look to it—it has undertaken tasks quite as difficult since its members were returned by household suffrage. There is even now scarcely a corner of the land where you can escape the railway whistle. There is not a nook into which an artist may not be followed by a summons to serve on a jury. It was but as yesterday that a painter friend of mine was urging me to visit a particular spot which he said would do me good by the utter absence of any signs of "advancing civilisation." "You may stay there for a month," said my friend, "without once coming across your intimate enemy, the cad." Well, I spoke to him the other day of visiting this spot. He grinned a ghastly grin, and made answer, "Don't go now; it was three years ago that I described the place to you; *now*, you will be met at the nearest station by an omnibus inscribed, To the

Fairy Glen, 6d. all the way ; and when you get to the Fairy Glen, you will find your intimate enemy there, smelling of beer or brandy, and leaving the greasy paper of his sandwiches all among the ferns." So I did not go. And here, if Mr. Milverton wants to know if I do not think it a very good thing that my intimate enemy should go and see the Fairy Glen, I answer boldly, No, I don't. He doesn't enjoy it, while he makes miserable the very few who would. Watch him when he goes to Margate or Ramsgate. He stuffs, and drinks, and smokes ; he makes the very air around him like that of the parlour of the "Pig and Whistle ;" and at nightfall he goes and plays at billiards under the gas. Why can't he enjoy his "Pig and Whistle" parlour in town, instead of making one at the seaside, to disgust me ? It is not so very long since ladies were afraid to go abroad in Bournemouth even, for fear of the cad, and what he has made of Ramsgate and Margate we all know. Take him away, Casimir, take him away. I cannot breathe for him. He is bricking me in. He is making life loathsome with his assessed taxes, his jury-papers, his gas-pipes, his virtues, his tobacco, his public spirit, his vices, his sanitary measures, his "representative government," and, above all, with his religion. For one effect of this incessant crowding up, and up, and up, is to give poets and sages mob-on-the-brain, and to leave me no religion, if he can help it, but the Worship of the Cad. I would rather not worship him. Extinguish him ! Platoon firing would do it, but mild measures are better. Away with him, Casimir ! Take him off, by hundreds of shiploads, to—somewhere or other. If I thought there was an inch of ground (except perhaps just around the poles) where he would not follow me and find me out, I would depart myself, merely to be out of his way. But, in the meantime, Casimir, my Captain of Emigration, take him off by tons upon tons, and clear the air a little for our souls and our bodies. Ask not what I shall do without him. That question came home to me this very, *very* moment. The cart is even now at my door with some wine for me, and, as I looked out of window upon the man that drove that cart,—the tradesman himself, as proper a man in his way as you could wish to see,—I asked myself, "Would I not rather live on bread and water than have my life regulated by beings like him ?" And I said to myself, Yea, I would, with amen to it ! And would I not rather dig my own well than be governed by such an one as he who left the water-rate paper at my door yesternoon ? Yea, would I, with amen to it. So, Casimir Maremma, my friend, away with him, and I will gladly pay his fare, even I,

TIMON FIELDMOUSE.

## SANCTA BEGA.

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I do not know how it may be now, but some twenty years ago St. Bees, in spite of its railway station and the fierce gusts that rush in from the sea with such force that the houses nearest the shore have to be roofed with flagstones, was a Cumberland Sleepy Hollow. All its inhabitants believed in the Church of England as one great institution, and in the Earl of Lonsdale as another, perhaps a greater. His lordship owned most of the land in the neighbourhood, and it was he or his predecessor who enabled Bishop Law to raise out of the ruins of the old Priory the Divinity College which joins on to the old parish-church. The College is not so famous for scholarship as the old Grammar School hard by, mentioned in one of De Quincey's papers. A St. Bees man has small chance of becoming Archbishop of Canterbury, or, indeed, an ecclesiastical Don of any kind; but for more than half a century, the quaint Cumberland college has turned out a very useful supply of hard-working clergy for the North of England and the colonies. In the time I speak of it was not unusual for a St. Bees man to come out first from a bishop's examination, and then the comrades he had left behind—including grave old married men with families—used to shuffle their feet and demand a holiday as clamorously as any school-boys. A queer medley were the St. Bees men of those days: ex-army officers, including jolly little Irish colonels who did not know anything, and did not make the slightest pretence of learning anything—always getting someone to prompt them at lecture, to write their sermons and do their Latin composition for them, through the simple force of their mellifluous blarney and beaming *bonhomie*; ex-physicians who fancied that the cure of souls would prove more profitable than they had found the cure of bodies; ex-uskers and tea dealers of ecclesiastical proclivities; turncoat dissenting ministers; miscellaneous young fellows, who wanted to take orders as the only chance of their getting brevet rank as gentlemen; young blockheads whose friends wanted them to be parsons because they despaired of being able to make them anything else; an oddity or two who seemed to have come to College simply to smoke and joke, since they never opened a book in the way of preparation, having a theory that nothing but "the light of nature" was requisite for the mastery of Greek Testament, Grotius, Tomline, Butler, Pearson, Wheatley, *Theophilus Anglicanus*, and Ecclesiastical History; harum-scarum Oxonians whose room had been preferred to their company in their University, but who persisted in wearing the Oxford instead of the St. Bees gown, scoffing at the notion of St. Bees men proper being "men" in any

legitimate collegiate sense ; and long-haired, raw-wristed young Welshmen, as wild as their own ponies, who came up clad in black dress-coats, corduroy breeches, and Belcher neckerchiefs. To supply the bodily wants of this Happy Family, a Whitehaven butcher used to come over once a week for orders, and to minister to their mental needs an *al fresco* bookseller planted his stall by Archbishop Grindall's bridge and plied his trade like Samuel Johnson's father.

And then when the black gowns had scattered like scared crows, a few quiet-loving folks would arrive, and make a watering-place of St. Bees.

And they might have gone farther and fared worse. St. Bees has noble sands, bounded northwards by its towering head, with sea-gulls screaming half-way down and a lighthouse planted sturdily upon the summit. Ennerdale is within a walk, and so is Calder Abbey. In the background there is a jumble of misty mountains, with Scawfell, rising, Saul-like, head and shoulders above his fellows, and far out in the west the Isle of Man rests like a cloud upon the sea ; all that is visible of it being, according to local belief, included in St. Bees' wide-spreading parish. The sturdy Manxmen, probably, would object to having Kirk Bride, Kirk Christ, Kirk Manghold, Kirk Lonan, Kirk Braddan, and Kirk Stanton thus appropriated.

But who *was* Sancta Bega ? Even at St. Bega's, syncopated into St. Bees, very vague answers are given to that question. I once saw a fancy portrait of her Sanctity, drawn in chalks, or rather chalk, by one of the aforementioned graceless Oxonians upon the lid of a tin pail used for domestic purposes, and elevated above the head of the unconscious junior tutor in the lecture-room. But I never could get hold of any life of her until one day in Market Square, Whitehaven, I stumbled upon a monkish chronicle printed from a MS. in the Cottonian collection into a little drab-covered, blue-papered, Carlisle-published book. A monk of the Priory named after her is supposed to have been the writer of this

#### VITA S. BEGÆ ET DE MIRACULIS EJUSDEM.

*Si essem Scriba*, he begins, *doctus in regno cælorum sciens et potens de Thesauris meo proferre nova et vetera, profecto eructaret cor meum verbum bonum, dicens immo edicens ad honorem regis Christi prima et novissima beatæ Begæ virginis opera.* And so he goes on. Our monkish friend, after the manner of his kind and the modern "liner," is undeniably mouthy—uses as many words as he can press into his service. The "liner's" motive is obvious: the old chronicler's, I fancy, was to make the task which staved off *ennui*—the "dreary intercourse of daily life" in cloisters—last as long as possible.

His long stories, cut short, read thus :

Bega was the daughter of a very powerful and most religious Irish king. From her childhood she was modest, retiring, diligent and pious. She early resolved to be the bride of Christ alone, and spent

most of her time in her chamber, where she read sacred scriptures and made golden fringes or deftly set gems in gold. Now the scissors were in her hand, and now the spindle; in order that she might learn how to decorate a church. She turned a deaf ear to old wives' fables and joined in no childish sports.

She was, however, passing fair, and men of all ranks basked in the light of her countenance, and when the days of her girlhood were over, and the lily and the rose made woman's spring-time on her cheek, the sons of princes, both Irish and from beyond the sea, brought costly presents and sought to make her their bride. But gold she esteemed as chaff, silver as the mire of the streets, gems as a straw tossed hither and thither by the wind, bracelets as ashes, perfumed garments, purple and fine linen, as filthy rags, whatever worldly pomp can give or promise as mere dung. As a king's daughter she was obliged at times to array herself in cloth of gold, but her real glory was within. To none but a heavenly bridegroom would she surrender herself. *Considerabat virgo prudentissima*, writes her bachelor biographer, *curas multimodas carnales sequentes nuptias; qualiter cum labore inceperant, in pudore persistunt, et cum dolore finiunt*. Upon a certain day Bega took a vow of virginity, and there appeared to her a man of comely aspect, who, as a sign of Heaven's approval, gave to her a bracelet marked with the sign of the cross. Whether it was an angel or a saint who appeared to her, her biographer cannot say, but he thus reasons for the actuality of the apparition: *Et non videatur cuiquam absurdum Begam domino ab angelo vel ab aliquo sancto oppugnari per armillam dum legamus a Sancto Germano Autisidorensi episcopo per nummum æreum consignari sanctam virginem genueram*.

The son of the King of Norway heard of the beauty of Bega, and sent messengers to Ireland with instructions to demand her in marriage for him if fame had not exaggerated her charms. When the messengers saw her, they thought that the half of her loveliness had not been told, and straightway carried out the prince's instructions. Her father approved of the proposed alliance, but stipulated that the prince should come, not by proxy but in person, and marry Bega in her native land. Accordingly the prince set sail for Ireland, and on his arrival there was right royally entertained. The chronicler gives the following naïf account of the banquet:—*Indulgebant interim ut se habet seculi vanitas calicibus epotandis potentes ad potandum et viri fortes ad miscendam ebrietatem; laurea se coronatum quilibet estimat, qui vino posset sopire immo quodammodo sepelire suum conbitorum. Tali itaque ludo assuetos temulentia cunctos pene oppresserat; et jam plurima pars noctis expensa singulos ad lectos suos compellebat*. From that little touch *viri fortes ad miscendam ebrietatem*, we may infer that hard-headed toppers in those days as in these were up to the dodge of drinking their weaker brethren under the table by getting them to mix their liquors.

In the meantime Bega was in dire distress. How could she escape? The gates were all locked; the bravest men in Ireland armed with dagger, battle-axe, and javelin, watched without. And even if she should escape, and seek asylum even in a nunnery, her father would drag her thence, and scourge her for presuming to wish to thwart his will. Lifting up pure hands in prayer, she poured out her heart like water—"Thou hast crowned Agnes, Agatha, Lucia, and Katharine," she said: "Preserve me also, O Lord." Her prayer was answered. She heard a voice commanding her to take her bracelet and descend to the sea, where she should find a vessel waiting to convey her to Britain. Deep sleep fell upon the guard; the doors flew open at the touch of the consecrated and consecrating bracelet, and Bega escaped. Having reached the sea, she found the promised ship, and embarked in it. It carried her to Copeland in Cumberland, but, before it anchored, ran, says local tradition, great risk of being wrecked upon the rocks of that wind and wave-beaten coast. In the extremity of her peril, Bega, according to the same authority, vowed to found a religious house upon the threatening shore, should she escape safe to land, and unlike Erasmus's votary,\* she kept her vow.

Bega wandered in the woods that then covered Copeland, and chose for her first cell a sea-side cave. She gathered herbs and healed the poor. The sea-mews brought her fish, and wolves, crouching at her feet, food from the forest. But pirates harried Copeland, and Bega, having taken counsel of Heaven, departed, leaving her bracelet behind her. Oswald, destined to wear the martyr's crown, then reigned in Northumberland, and St. Aidan, a holy Irishman who had come from Iona, was the first bishop of Lindisfarn. To him she went, and by him was solemnly consecrated nun, and under his auspices she founded the first nunnery ever established in Northumberland. Afterwards the pious king gave her a grant of land at Hartlepool, and there she established a more famous monastery. Virgins flocked to it, and married women also, who had repented of their secular marriage-vows. Whilst the monastery was building, Bega cooked food for the workmen and carried it to them with her own hands,—*velut apis mellificans currens et discurrens ministrabat*. She also laboured hard and made her holy sisterhood labour likewise

\* "There was there a certain Englishman, who promised golden mountains to our Lady of Walsingham, if he touched land again. Others promised many things to the Wood of the Cross, which was in such a place. I heard one, not without laughter, who with a clear voice, lest he should not be heard, promised Christopher, who is at Paris, on the top of a church,—a mountain more truly than a statue,—*a wax candle as big as he was himself*. When bawling out as hard as he could, the man reiterated this offer, an acquaintance that by chance stood next, known to him, touched him with his elbow and said—'Have a care what you promise; though you make an auction of all your goods you'll not be able to pay!' Then he says, with a voice now lower, to wit, lest Christopher should hear,—'Hold your tongue, you fool; do you think I speak from my heart? If once I touch land, I'll not give him a tallow candle.'"—*Erasmus's Dialogues*.



on the decoration of the church ; at the same time not forgetting to urge them to fast and watch and pray and sing psalms and spiritual songs. St. Oswald and St. Oswin enriched her monastery with further grants of land, and she became the admiration of the whole congregation. But she began to fear that whilst ministering like Martha, she was losing Mary's better part, and, therefore, when St. Hilda returned from her novitiate in France, Bega prevailed upon the Bishop to release her from her superiors and to induce St. Hilda, who refused at first from humility, to succeed her. Bega retired to a life of contemplation at Tadcaster, whilst the monastery flourished under Hilda's rule. Oswin committed his daughter to her care, and afterwards gave her land on which she founded the noble monastery of Whitby. For seven years before her death Hilda was tried as gold is tried in the furnace, being grievously afflicted. Bega often visited her, and the two holy sisters confirmed each other's faith. On the night of Hilda's death, Bega was at a monastery which Hilda had founded at Hackness. She was lying in the dormitory when, just as the cocks began to crow, she heard the tolling of a convent bell—the passing-bell ; and, looking up, was dazzled by the flood of light which poured down upon her, for the roof was gone. But in the midst of the brilliance she saw St. Hilda borne heavenwards in the arms of angels. When she came to herself, she called Freitha, who was acting for the abbess, and told her of her vision. All the nuns were then aroused, and they spent the rest of the night in chanting psalms and praying for the peace of Hilda's soul. At dawn came monks, bringing tidings that St. Hilda had departed this life at the time when Bega beheld her ascending into heaven.—Bega remained at Hackness until her own death on the eve of All Saints' Day. *Congrue satis, says her flowery biographer, dum vigilia omnium sanctorum recolitur, ad consortium eorum transivit e mundo ; ut hieme in terris intrante, illi exeunti hyems omnis transiret, et imber abiret et recederet, ver eternum ei luceret, flores rosarum et lilia convallium apparent in celo.*

She was buried at Hackness, but the Danes invaded the land, and for more than 400 years the place of her burial was unknown. Then it was revealed to holy men with a command that they should transport her remains to Whitby. They arrived at Hackness, and digging deep, found a stone coffin on the lid of which was cut—

#### HOC EST SEPULCHRUM BEGÆ.

An odour of sanctity exhaled from it when it was opened. Within were found St. Bega's ashes, and her veil still whole. They were borne in solemn procession by monks, chanting psalms, to Whitby monastery. When the Priory named after her was founded in Copeland, the bracelet which Sancta Bega had left behind her was preserved in it, as its most important relic.



The following are a few of the wonders which it wrought :

A moss-trooper from Galloway, when setting out upon a raid, was adjured by his mother to commit no violence in the land of St. Bega. He laughed her counsel to scorn. "What harm can that old woman do me?" he cried; and, then making a contemptuous gesture, "let her hit me here," he shouted, as he rode away. He plundered St. Bega's territory and was riding off on a horse he had stolen from it, when he was pursued. Fearing to be shot in the heart, he bowed his head over his horse's neck, and one of his pursuers, drawing his bow almost at a venture, shot him in the very part he had contemptuously smacked. The arrow went into his body up to the feathers. He fell from his horse and instantly expired.

The miracle of the snow is variously related. Let us first hear our monk's account :

Ranulf Meschines established the monastery of St. Bees, and endowed it with lands. But he appears to have repented of his generosity. Our monk, like Mr. Carlyle's Jocelinus de Brakelonda, "is not without secularity." *Sæpius enim inveniuntur in fundatoribus aut patronis monasteriorum, et maxime heredibus eorum, he caustically remarks, qui possessiones cœnobiorum satagunt minuere potius quam augmentare et terrarum illorum terminos coarctare conantur quam dilatare.* Accordingly Ranulf accused the monks of having taken more land than he had given them. The monks produced their deeds and then betook themselves to prayer; on the day appointed for the decision of the case multitudes flocked into Kirkby (*church-town*—St. Bees). Lo! a great miracle had been wrought. Whilst all the country round was white with snow, the land the monastery had claimed was dry like Gideon's fleece.

So our monkish friend; but the story I heard at St. Bees was this :

On the eve of Midsummer Day St. Bega appeared to Ranulf, praying him to grant her monks *more* land. He jeeringly answered that she might have as much as she should see on the morrow covered with snow. When the Kirkby people woke next morning they saw the Midsummer sun shining—far as the eye could reach—out to the Isle of Man—on spotless snow. Hence the great extent of St. Bees parish in the present day.

Mr. Carlyle, apropos of the glimpses which *his* monkish chronicler gives of everyday English life in the twelfth century, exclaims,— "Thanks to thee, Jocelin Boswell. Jerusalem was taken by the Crusaders and again lost by them; and Richard Cœur de Lion 'veiled his face' as he passed in sight of it: *but how many other things went on the while.*"\* Perhaps, honest Jocelin's hints would not have been very suggestive had it not been for what Dean Stanley has well called the "electric light" of the genius flashed upon them; but

\* "Past and Present."

Jocelin is, indeed, a flesh-and-blood Boswell in comparison with our Cloudland chronicler. Still even he does occasionally give us something better than phantasmata dimly painted on mist. *Ecce signum* :—

The lands of Godard, Lord of Egremont, marched with those of St. Bega; and one autumn day he turned out his horses to grass in a meadow, bordering upon a barley-field belonging to the monastery. The corn had been cut but not carried, and the horses, running wild, rushed into the field and devoured some of the barley, and trod more of it into mire, whilst the lads in charge looked on enjoying the sport. Presently up ran one of the monastery people, and bade the boys drive the horses out, and pay for the damage they had done. They, however, puffed up because they were lackeys of a lord, saucily answered that they would do more mischief still. The St. Bees man was afraid to answer them, but turning to the church, he lifted up his eyes and hands and prayed Sancta Bega to do justice to her injured servants, and avenge them on the trespassers.

"Let her come and do what she can," the boys shouted back; "take the shoes off the horses, take the horses themselves, if she can."

After a time, still cackling fool's laughter, they began to prepare for their ride home; but when they were about to bridle their horses, they found that their hoofs were loosened from the fetlocks, and full of barley-corns. When Godard heard of what had happened, he gave up the meadow to the monastery, and the hoofs still full of barley were placed within the church. As a *proof* of this miracle, our chronicler states that in his time the meadow still belonged to the monastery—a mode of reasoning which reminds one of the triumphant "and there it is to this very day," with which mounting blocks have been pointed to as evidence that Queen Elizabeth or Oliver Cromwell once mounted from them.

The next miracle on our list seems rather purposeless :

The people of Copeland were at variance with their lords as to the proper Neutgeld—tax on oxen—which they ought to pay. At last it was decided that the question should be settled by the sworn testimony of persons likely to know what had been the custom in times past. One, Adam, the son of Ailsus, having been sworn on the bracelet of St. Bega, told a lie instead of nothing but the truth. According to Adam, the lords only demanded their prescriptive dues,—which was false. As a punishment Adam was handed over to Satanas, and for nine years was possessed and tormented by a devil. On the tenth year he was taken, against his will, into the holy virgin's church. There he fell into a trance, and when he came to himself he was in his right mind. For the rest of his life Adam was very penitent, but since the Copelanders had still to pay the surcharge which his false oath had imposed upon them, they probably did not sing *Te Deum* over his recovery.

There is no end to her miracles, says St. Bega's chronicler, but he

prefers to give only those about which there cannot be a shadow of a doubt. Here is another of these indubitable wonders :

A native of Chartres had two sons, sorely afflicted from their birth. The father was bidden, in a dream, to take his sons to England and go the round of all the saints' shrines there, until his children found relief. Accordingly, having made what now-a-days we should call a perambulator, a little carriage which he sometimes pulled and sometimes pushed, he placed his sons in it, and set out. Having crossed the Straits of Dover, *magna difficultate transfretans*, puffing away at his perambulator, he went to Canterbury, and thence gradually worked his way round to Tyneside, but still found no deliverance for his sons. Heavy at heart, he fell asleep in the church of St. Oswin ; but as he slumbered he heard a voice commanding him to repair to the church of St. Bega in Copeland, and promising that there his sons should be freed from their infirmities. He obeyed the call ; the virgin, radiating light, healed his sons by her gentle touch, and the elder, who had never before spoken, rendered thanks to her in fluent English as well as French. Father and sons tarried a few days at Kirkby, and then returned to France rejoicing ; leaving behind them the little carriage, in *testimonium miraculi*, says our friend, but most likely the father, at any rate, was glad enough to get rid of it. One more marvel must suffice.

A certain young man of the name of John—*Johannes nomine, sed anti-Johannes opere*—fell in love with Beatrice, the wife of William, surnamed the Hare ; and, as she would have nothing to say to him, he pounced upon her in a valley shaded by alder trees, *ut lupus agnam ut milvus columbam*, as she was returning home with her mother after taking the Holy Communion in St. Bega's church on Easter Sunday. Anti-Johannes carried off the wife of William the Hare, with the aid of a confederate. Her brothers armed themselves and went in pursuit. They fell in with the confederate and cut off his head, but they could not find the ravisher. But St. Bega punished him fearfully for the breach of her peace. He hid in a wood where an evil spirit took possession of him, and after wandering about until first his clothes and then his flesh had been torn off him by the low branches and the briars, he died a miserable death, and was buried at Holm Cultram.

I may add, that a few years ago the inhabitants of the outlying chapelries of St. Bees' wide parish, used to flock in, like Mrs. Hare and her mother, to take the Lord's Supper in the mother-church on Easter Sunday ; for aught I know, they may do so still. I may add, also, that the Easter eggs which Mr. Cremer, junior, has recently introduced into our nurseries as toys, are an ancient and sacred institution in Copeland. At Easter-time the coloured "*Pace eggs*" (*Pâque, Πάσχα*) may be seen there on every mantel-piece, and ranging across the middle of every window.

CHARLES CAMDEN.

## GEORGE ELIOT.

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MEN watch the growth of a literary reputation as they would watch the erection of some magnificent structure. From the laying of the foundations, broad and deep, to the crowning stone of the edifice, they follow with interest the successive stages of development, careful of that symmetry which is to give an æsthetic appearance to the whole. Sometimes the building presents unworthy workmanship in the course of its construction : whilst occasionally it is never finished at all. In the domains of literature are to be beheld the ruins of many temples of genius, grand in their inception, wondrous in their promise, but upon whose colossal foundations the majestic pile which the world expected has never been completely reared.

These observations have been suggested by the remarkable unanimity of opinion with which the latest work of the very remarkable writer whose name appears at the head of these pages has been received. Perhaps the appearance of no book in late years has resulted in such a consensus of applause. The critics, differing, as they must inevitably do, upon the various divisions and construction of the work, and approving or rejecting now its philosophy and now its characters or plot, all unite in regarding "*Middlemarch*" as one of the few great literary products of the generation. And public opinion has endorsed in a very marked degree the verdict of its professed leaders.

We live in times which are not very prolific in lofty genius. Restless activity is the most distinguishing characteristic of the nineteenth-century intellect : its movements are rapid as those of the Giant Steam, and the numbers are few of those who turn into the old bypaths of the world to catch the sweet scent of the fields and to enjoy the beneficent calm of nature. The great highways of the world are thronged by the devotees of commerce, who are only to be approached at brief intervals by the author, and whose attention cannot even be retained, except the intruder has something of real import to communicate. The national wealth has vastly increased during the past fifty years ; national enlightenment, too, has progressed almost in the same ratio—though there is still urgent need of the Schoolmaster—but there has been a great dearth of master spirits. It may even be doubted whether we have one writer who fully grasps the significance and the tendencies of the age, or who can in any sense be called its interpreter, or the prophet and pioneer of its successor. It is not that we ask for, or have need of, a Shakspeare : the great dramatist would have been the natural heritage of any century since the world

began, and he belongs to all. It may be that in many respects we desire a more restricted genius, but that we do look for the appearance of one who shall gather together, as it were, the tangled threads of our consciousness and of our new conditions, is, it will surely be admitted, indubitable. Never was there a time when the industries of the world were so wedded together for accomplishing the physical welfare of man, and never was there a time when the individual threw in his labour so lustily for the common weal. But what of those things which belong to the emotional and the spiritual? The sweat of the brow will never ransom the soul. Toil may repress for a time the sense of an immortal craving, but it can never extinguish it; and he who approves himself a king in enterprise may find that, like the man in Bunyan's allegory, as a result of that very enterprise, he will be unable to lift his eyes from his accustomed dust to the splendour that encompasses him. Humanity cries out to the inspired for some support to which its tendrils can cling. The noble ideas, Work and Duty, have been but a partial answer to this cry. Beyond their goal there is yet another Beyond. They present no solution for those yearnings of the spirit which are one in all ages and climes. To-day, the world's eyes are still straining after the chief good; but our vision is overshadowed; the clouds are heavy about us, and any hand that leads us but a step towards the outer confines of darkness is grasped as that of a Brother holding the commission of the Divinity. It has been said that the spiritual force of George Eliot's writings belongs to that complemental influence which is at present desiderated for the satisfaction of the innate desires of humanity. It will be our purpose, in offering some general criticisms upon her works, also to endeavour to ascertain in what sense or degree her genius answers to the real need of the time.

This much may be admitted at the outset—that whatever should be the position which this writer will assume in the estimation of our successors, she will stand alone. The niche she occupies will have no other tenant; whether it be high or low, solitarily she must inhabit it, looking down upon mankind with sad but benignant eyes. Comparisons which have been instituted between her and other novelists seem to us to have utterly failed. In what sense does she resemble those even more illustrious brethren of her craft—Scott, Thackeray, or Dickens? The capacity to perceive things which differ is surely dormant when such views are forced upon us. We have seen George Eliot pronounced the equal—occasionally the superior—of these and all other masters of fiction. The one great central or common power, without which no writer will ever attain to eminence as a novelist, is, of course, conspicuous in the author of "*Middlemarch*," as it is in the author of "*Vanity Fair*"—viz. the power of perception. But there the comparison almost entirely ends. Like Thackeray, George Eliot is able to gauge the depths and the motives of the human soul, but

the insight acts upon the two minds in quite a different way, and the genius consequently works in a different groove. As to the speculation, which is superior?—a somewhat thankless one at the best—we should say unquestionably Thackeray; and partly so on account of certain psychological considerations to be mentioned hereafter in connection with the genius of the other which appear to us to debar her from a position of equality. Then, too, as regards Dickens—and we only refer to these comparisons because of the reckless manner in which they have now and then been instituted by reviewers—while it is true that George Eliot exhibits a deeper penetration than Dickens, yet there has scarcely been a writer in the world who has given us such portraits as came from the latter by simply touching upon their personal appearance. Mere clothes even are sufficient for identification. Dickens got to the inner by means of the outer. If he did not go beneath the surface, and probe the very soul's depth in isolated characters, he has given us one of the largest portrait galleries we enjoy—in whose endless variety we are astonished to see the charm of naturalness everywhere preserved. Perhaps more points of resemblance might be discovered between Sir Walter Scott and our subject than with either of the two authors already named, but the points of difference again are so very great, that it would answer no useful purpose to examine them now. Although it may be conceded that George Eliot has written two (at the most three) works which entitle her to take a place in the first rank of novelists, there are yet some four or five names which, when we consider their life's work as a whole, must remain higher than her own. But such juxtaposition of novelists is like comparing Homer with Virgil, Byron with Tennyson—or any others whose genius presents as wide a dissimilarity.

That series of works which has culminated in "*Middlemarch*" scarcely needs recapitulation, but it will be convenient here to make some regular, if slight reference to them, preparatory to an examination of their general claims in the matters of purpose and art. The almost perfect character of "*Scenes of Clerical Life*"—the first of these numerous works—leads to the inference that though this was the introductory venture with which George Eliot tempted the public, it by no means represents her first essay in novel-writing. The hand which wrote that must have written and re-written, and then committed its lucubrations to the flames, times oft and numberless, ere it could have given us such a genuine piece of workmanship. It would be incredible to suppose that a work to which even the most astute critic can scarcely take exception, either in conception, execution, or art—could have been the first that its author had produced. But had the probationary period before its appearance been never so long, the writer was amply repaid, when it at length saw the light, by the public recognition of its merit. Yet this recognition, though appreciative, was

select. Competent judges perceived at once that the originalities—if the word may be permitted—had received an accession ; but it was left for the next work from the same source first to create that popular *furor* which has attended ever since the appearance of her various novels and poems. The power of the “Scenes of Clerical Life” lies, we think, beyond doubt in their absolute truthfulness—a truthfulness which embraces situation and character alike. The artist has not only been at work, but at work carefully, and only the last creation of the novelist besides this has been distinguished for the same Teniers-like effect. The picture is complete. Behind that observant eye which has preserved for us all the *minutiae* of natural scenery, there has been the heart engaged in sympathy and fellowship with the human character. Shepperton Church, with its appurtenances of parson, clerk, and choir, is as real to us as that little village church or meeting-house of our own, of which we have reminiscences stowed away in a far corner of the memory. Better than this, the finest emotions of our nature have been stirred by the sad fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton and of Janet Dempster. As we read, the book thrills us, saddens us, almost makes us partake in the agony of its subjects, but we cannot lay it down. Something insists that we should go on, even to draining the last drop in the cup of bitterness, or shedding the last tear with them. Was there ever any story in real life which touched us more than did that of “Janet’s Repentance?” Yet many such tragic lives are being led around us every day, of which the world either does not know or does not care to know. But it was the terrible individualisation of suffering which moved us here—such an individualisation achieved by art as to have left the sketch one of the most indelible of the kind in the language. George Eliot in these three “Scenes” at once established herself as a writer from whom the very highest work might be expected ; and she had done this with probably one of the most unpleasant choice of subjects which she could have made. Treated by other writers, such terribly painful experiences would have been failures : here they were sublimated by genius. Thus it was she laid the broad basis of her career. This work formed one epoch in George Eliot’s literary life.

From its production to the appearance of “Romola,” we perceive nothing from her hand which would entitle her to the position she now occupies, not even excepting “Adam Bede,” which was most frequently cited as her masterpiece, prior to the publication of “Middlemarch.” All the wit which blazes in the former—and there is more of that rich humour for which the author is famous in this work than in any other—all the elaborate drawing expended upon one or two individual characters, fail to convince us that as a work of art it is equal to its predecessor. The leading personage, it is true, stands out in bold relief, but the ordinary artificer is found in the plot. She popularized herself with a vengeance, and as a natural result, with



such ability, the favour with which the effort was received was immense and world-wide. The severely simple incidents of the previous stories gave place to that necessary amount of sensationalism which the reading public had begun to demand, and George Eliot, as regards narrative, was to be classed in "Adam Bede" along with the general novel manufacturer, though of course far ahead of that individual in the literary skill with which she manipulated her separate characters. It is in this book, too, that we originally notice what we cannot but regard as a strange peculiarity—we might almost say defect—in this great writer, viz., her extreme unwillingness to leave in the comfortable circumstances in which she finds them, those members of the upper classes with whom she has to deal. She frequently contrives to make them appear either weak, miserable, or criminal. There are three gentlemen of position or wealth in "Adam Bede," the Rev. Mr. Irwin, Captain Arthur Donnithorne, and the old Squire. Our feeling towards the first is one of toleration; he is smooth, gentlemanly, bland, with beautifully white hands, but no great strength of heart, and quite incapable of raising anything like enthusiasm in us; the second becomes a betrayer; and the character of the third shall be indirectly described by Mrs. Poyser, as the Squire attempts to elude her biting sarcasms:—

"You may run away from my words, sir, and you may go spinnin' under-hand ways o' doing us a mischief, for you've got Old Harry to your friend, though nobody else is; but I tell you for once as we're not dumb creaturs to be abused and made money on by them as ha' got the lash i' their hands for want o' knowing how t' undo the tackle. An' if I'm th' only one as speaks my mind, there's plenty o' the same way o' thinking i' this pariah and the next to 't, for your name's no better than a brimstone match in everybody's nose—if it isna two or three old folks as you think o' saving your soul by giving 'em a bit o' flannel and a drop o' porridge. An' you may be right i' thinking it'll take but little to save your soul; for it'll be the smallest savin y' iver made, wi' all your scrapin.'"

The equalization of suffering in the human race is never arranged by Providence, who allows "the wicked to flourish as a green bay tree," while the poor and the weak are, too often, still further depressed. To us, who see only the fragments of His purposes, and nothing scarcely of their finality, this may seem indefensible. But this is nothing to us; yet George Eliot seems to take a delight in holding the scales of Justice herself, and in meting out what she considers an equivalent of anguish or suffering, to the possession of worldly good. This peculiarity appears strongly in other books of hers besides "Adam Bede,"—notably in "Middlemarch," where the intensest, keenest suffering is placed upon Dorothea and Mr. Bulstrode, and where contempt falls upon other fortunate inheritors of this world's good. We need not go far to find the secret of the success of "Adam Bede." It lies with three persons—Adam, Dinah, and Mrs. Poyser. The last named is one of the very few prominent original



characters in literature. Her wit is of the finest flavour, and, in truth, we would rather have laboured in one of her husband's hay-fields than come within reach of her tongue by his fireside.

The next novel—taking them in chronological order—is “*The Mill on the Floss* ;” and this, notwithstanding its tragic scenes and strongly-marked individualities, we like the least of all. “Despair, despair,” which seems to be written by the author upon all human endeavour and human life, broods over Dorlcote Mill. Nothing is allowed to end happily. Poor, crippled Philip, with his keen susceptibilities and brilliant talents, sees in Maggie Tulliver the goal for which his spirit craves ; but the great compensation of life is snatched from him. He is brought near enough to Paradise to have a glimpse of what it is like, and then plunged back into Hell again—the hell of bitter disappointment. And Maggie, with all her wild impulses, does she fare much better ? Is not her life one of gloom, except for the few brilliant gleams of sunshine which occasionally break athwart it ? The tempter appears in the form of manly beauty, and though she remains innocent in the great temptation, misery supervenes, accompanied with the slain hopes and desires of others. All the characters in this terrible drama seem from their very first appearance to be working against each other for evil, though between many of them there were truly sympathetic feelings could they have had their way unrestricted. The cross purposes of the world are displayed in all their wretched and calamitous perfection. Little by little the meshes are wound about that large-souled, noble, good-desiring but wrong-doing Maggie Tulliver, till at last there is but one ending for her mistakes and failures. She feels there is no escape, and asks in her agony for death. “But how long it will be before death comes ! I am so young, so healthy. How shall I have patience and strength ? Am I to struggle and fall, and repent again ?—has life other trials as hard for me still ?” No ; the end comes ; though in real life such annihilation is but rarely vouchsafed when the soul feels that it has touched the very verge of suffering. It is left generally to acquire resignation, or to feel more prolonged agony. But Maggie asked for death and received it, the only earthly light she enjoyed being the momentary satisfaction of dying in the company of her brother, from whom she had been estranged in life, but with whom she was thus tragically reunited in death. This story gives one the impression that it was not exactly what George Eliot intended it to be when she commenced it ; but that as it progressed she drifted into that current of sadness which seems all-potent with her. One would have thought she could have devised some other ending, which should leave the spirit of Maggie to purify itself and grow strong in the same world which had witnessed her failures. To be engulfed in the Floss seems an ignoble end to that life which endured so much, and which, if prolonged, might have

seen the light which must dawn in the future. Her worst temptations had been conquered; moral strength had begun to return; with Divine aid her fine spirit might have worked out its fuller conclusions: but her history is abruptly closed, the real heroism of her nature is not suffered to exhibit itself, and the rushing flood closes upon her, blotting out her name for ever.

The mastery of our novelist in depicting broken lives, and the affection with which she seems to hover round them, are again manifest in her next novel, "Silas Marner." The record of bitterness, however, is now and then lightened by glimpses of life in the manufacturing districts—touches of humour abound, and the enjoyments and occupations of men give variety to a story which would otherwise be intolerable. But the artist, on the whole, shows no power of recovery in this story. It is sensational and improbable—too commonly so. Now and then we encounter beautiful and poetic ideas. This, for instance, is admirably put: "In old days there were angels who came and took men by the hand and led them away from the City of Destruction. We see no white-winged angels now. But yet men are led away from threatening destruction: a hand is put into theirs, which leads them forth gently towards a calm and bright land, so that they look no more backward; and the hand may be a little child's." Such is the story of the weaver of Raveloe; a little child is to lead him back again to the faith which he has lost—to be the connecting link between him and the fact of an over-ruling Providence, whose existence he had begun to doubt. The golden head of Effie, as he sees her lying upon the floor, seems to him to be his gold which had been stolen come back to him again. This is a fantastic idea, an almost inadmissible conceit on the part of the author, but it is very striking. The child was something more than Silas Marner's gold; it was a messenger from the Unseen, and stirred in him feelings which had long been dormant, if, indeed, they had ever existed in a vital, active form. The whole gist of the painful story of Silas Marner is given in the following few words, spoken by one of the characters:—

"'It's the will o' Them above as a many things should be dark to us; but there's some things as I've never felt i' the dark about, and they're mostly what comes i' the day's work. You were hard done by that once, Master Marner, and it seems as though you'll never know the rights of it; but that doesn't hinder there *being* a rights, Master Marner, for all it's dark to you and me.'

"'No,' said Silas, 'no; that doesn't hinder. Since the time the child was sent to me and I've come to love her as myself, I've had light enough to trusten by; and now she says she'll never leave me, I think I shall trusten till I die.'"

Thus it is: misrepresentation, false swearing, no opportunity to show purity of motive; and the world goes on to-day as it did in

Silas Marner's, with its inequalities, its baseness, and its hiding of the true light.

Another epoch in George Eliot's literary career was reached with the issue of "Romola," a work differing in almost all essential respects from any which preceded it. One evidence of the power of the author may be found in the fact that while all her books are of confessed excellence, there is probably more difference of opinion on the subject as to which is her *chef-d'œuvre* than is the case with any other writer. We have ourselves known each one of her books distinguished by having this pre-eminence given to it, though not always by competent judges. It may safely be conceded to "Romola," however, that it is one of the three works upon which its writer's fame will chiefly rest. Yet after reading it, what is the most prominent impression left upon us? Have we cared one jot for the sinuosities and incidents of the plot? Perhaps there has been less of such interest than we have experienced in reading other stories. The author has not been altogether successful in transferring us into the midst of that Italian life which she professes to depict. She has given us sermons of Savonarola, but the great Frate himself does not appear before us as a being drawn with realistic power: and thus it is with several of the remaining characters in the novel. Its profound, its undying interest consists in the painting of Romola and Tito, individualities in which George Eliot surpassed herself, and which she has hardly approached in power in her later works. Shorn of these two characters, "Romola" would be a dead letter as a narrative; the plot is scarcely noted; it is again that fearful burden of human sorrow which moves us, and irresistibly leads our sympathies captive. The terrible retribution of neglected duty overtakes Tito; he has allowed selfishness gradually to encrust his spirit; and by-and-by, the beautiful youth, who seemed the personification of spring, becomes a hateful, pitiable thing in the world's eyes. The effects of the wrong-doing of such a spirit upon others with whom it is brought into contact are painfully shown in the cross which Romola is called to bear, but which brings out the true nobleness of her spirit. Thus does the degradation of one become the crown of glory of the other. But the lesson is bitter. Why should the life of Romola in her father's study be broken in upon, and she made to feel the exquisite delights of love only to be crushed and bruised in her very tenderest affections? Why, indeed, except to show that the great burden of the human race is never lifted from the shoulders. See how the guilt of Tito not only damns his own spirit but draws others into misery, despair, and vengeance. It turns Baldassarre into a murderer—he who had made an idol of the youth. "When he was a child," he said, "he lifted soft eyes towards me, and held my hand willingly. I thought, this boy will surely love me a little: because I give my life to him and strive that he shall know no sorrow, he

will care a little when I am thirsty—the drop he lays on my parched lips will be a joy to him.” But he who thus spake ended by strangling the life out of the child whom he had loved so much. With Romola the ending was different ; but she only came off bearing the scars of sanguinary moral battles. She conquered, as by her life. And when the tumult of existence subsided, and she was able to take up the threads of her history, and interpret its significance to the world, this is what she said to Lillo :

“ It is only a poor sort of happiness that could ever come by caring very much about our own narrow pleasures. We can only have the highest happiness, such as goes along with being a great man, by having wide thoughts, and much feeling for the rest of the world as well as for ourselves ; and this sort of happiness often brings so much pain with it, that we can only tell it from pain by its being what we would choose before everything else, because our souls see it is good. There are so many things wrong and difficult in the world that no man can be great—he can hardly keep himself from wickedness—unless he gives up thinking much about pleasure or reward, and gets strength to endure what is hard and painful. My father had the greatness that belongs to integrity ; he chose poverty and obscurity rather than falsehood. And there was Fra Girolamo—you know why I keep to-morrow sacred: he had the greatness which belongs to a life spent in struggling against powerful wrongs, and in trying to raise men to the highest deeds they are capable of. And so, my Lillo, if you mean to act nobly, and seek to know the best things God has put within reach of men, you must learn to fix your mind on that end, and not on what will happen to you because of it. And remember, if you were to choose something lower and make it the rule of your life to seek your own pleasure and escape from what is disagreeable, calamity might come just the same ; and it would be a calamity falling on a base mind, which is the one form of sorrow that has no balm in it, and that may well make a man say—It would have been better for me if I had never been born.”

This speech is as noble as though pronounced by a monarch over his fallen crown and dismantled palaces ; one who has lost the material symbols of royalty, but preserved the richer sceptre of a conquering spirit.

Passing on to the next novel, we find “ Felix Holt ” to be entertaining as a link between a dying and a coming generation ; and the way in which social revolutions affect village existence, is told with much shrewd humour and truthfulness. But the story fails to beget any amount of real enthusiasm in the reader, though he is interested in tracing the cross-action in such minds as Felix Holt’s and Esther Lyon’s upon each other. The acerbities of the violent Radical are softened by the sweet influence of the refined maiden, while on the other hand the unsuspected heroic nature of Esther is made manifest by the power of the vigorous intellect and iron will of Felix. The intimate knowledge which George Eliot displayed of the ramifications of Dissenting village life in preceding stories is again apparent, and though the constant return to the never-failing fund of humour which springs

up in connection with Malthouse yard becomes rather wearisome, it is impossible not to be amused at the idiosyncrasies of the several characters. The noble old minister, Mr. Lyon, is drawn with a loving hand; his large heart shows through his quaint religious phrases; then we have Mrs. Holt, who delivers her views upon the doctrine of Salvation without works: "I thank the Lord I never needed to put *myself* on a level with the thief on the cross. I've done *my* duty, and more, if anybody comes to that; for I've gone without my bit of meat to make broth for a sick neighbour: and if there's any of the church members say they've done the same, I'd ask them if they had the sinking at the stomach as I have." But after the extraction of a few excellent passages from the book—and of course it would be impossible for George Eliot to write anything without some such passages—it is a very inferior production regarded in the light of its fellows. Unreasoning critics, as "is their nature to," indulged in ecstasies regarding it, on account of its authorship, precisely as they did in another instance which we shall shortly point out; but some little time having elapsed since then, it will now be granted, in all soberness, that better works have been written by contemporary authors. It is the poorest of all George Eliot's works. Though it is not devoid of excellent lessons, judged in the light of art it is unworthy of her reputation, and contrasts most unfavourably with its predecessor and successor, especially the latter. There are times when the writer does not appear to have her subject well in hand; yet there are touches and treatment which show that she had a special tenderness for some of the characters. Had this been her only work, however, or had her other works been of a similar character, the fame of George Eliot would have been but of ephemeral duration.

Beyond all question, her greatest literary offspring is the novel which has recently delighted all circles, "*Middlemarch*." This forms the third and crowning epoch of her career. It is to its author what *Hamlet* is to Shakspeare. In reading it we scarcely know which to admire most—its literary execution, its philosophy, or its profound studies of character. In regard to the first, or its artistic skill, the improvement on preceding works is wonderful. It is one of the finest and most finished productions of the time. The whole of its parts may be taken as eight separate canvases on which the most admirable and perfect paintings have been executed—each a complete representation in itself, but, if desired, forming a series around which as a whole the most intense interest clings. The artist has here recovered herself, and asserts her supremacy as one of the greatest of novel-writers. Look at the book simply as a collection of portraits, without any reference to the narrative, and what a vast variety of the most life-like individualities do we obtain! First, there is Dorothea Brooke, the heroine of the history, a sort of young lady

to whom any man, if he understood her, must be given up to idolatry. Strong in common-sense when that article should be in requisition, she is yet as unlike the conception of the modern young lady as it is possible to imagine. The accomplishments which are supposed to "finish" heroines generally were trifles to her, who knew many passages of Pascal's *Pensées* and of Jeremy Taylor by heart. She regarded life from a stand-point lofty as the heavens are above the earth compared with her sister and others of a similar calibre. "She was enamoured," we are told, "of intensity and greatness, and rash in embracing whatever seemed to her to have those aspects; likely to seek martyrdom, to make retractions, and then to incur martyrdom after all in a quarter where she had not sought it." We do not quarrel with the author because such a combination of talent and aspiration as met in Dorothea Brooke is rarely if ever found in human life: conceiving the paragon possible, we accept her with all her grand ideas—crude, sometimes, as they are grand—and yield to a feeling of sympathetic tenderness for such a character, which can never find its proper sphere in the world, for the very reason that man is unable to understand though capable of admiring it. Such a nature must always shine upon the race like a splendid but solitary star. How would nineteenth-century society, with its mad thirst for gold, interpret the feelings of a girl who could refuse the rich baronet, Sir James Chettam, and yet think it a most glorious destiny to accept John Milton, with his blindness, his obscurity, and his poverty! Would this be the wisdom that would find favour in its eyes? Dorothea's sister, Celia, confessed the attraction of wealth and position, but as for our heroine her ideal was after the Casaubon sort—men who bore about them the mystic talisman of learning or research. There is no wonder, then, that Dorothea should have been captivated by the rector of Lowick, a worthy man more than double her age, with unprepossessing features, but a more certain passport to her favour. For was he not projecting a great work, a "Key to all Mythologies," in which he should show "that all the mythical systems or erratic mythical fragments in the world were conceptions of a tradition originally revealed?" As an inferential sketch of three characters in the fewest possible words commend us to the following:—

"When the two girls were in the drawing-room alone, Celia said—

"How very ugly Mr. Casaubon is!"

"Celia! he is one of the most distinguished men I ever saw. He is remarkably like the portrait of Locke. He has the same deep eye-sockets."

"Had Locke those two white moles with hairs on them?"

"Oh, I daresay! when people of a certain sort looked at him," said Dorothea, walking away a little.

"Mr. Casaubon is so sallow!"

"All the better. I suppose you admire a man with the complexion of a *cochon de lait*." (This is a spiteful hit at poor Sir James—for Celia's benefit.)

"'Dodo!' exclaimed Celia, looking after her in surprise. 'I never heard you make such a comparison before.'

"'Why should I make it before the occasion came? It is a good comparison: the match is perfect.'

"Miss Brooke was clearly forgetting herself, and Celia thought so.

"'I wonder you show temper, Dorothea.'

"'It is so painful in you, Celia, that you will look at human beings as if they were mere animals with a toilette, and never see the great soul in a man's face.'

"'Has Mr. Casaubon a great soul?' Celia was not without a touch of *naïve* malice.

"'Yes, I believe he has,' said Dorothea, with the full voice of decision. 'Everything I see in him corresponds to his pamphlet on Biblical Cosmology.'

"'He talks very little,' said Celia.

"'There is no one for him to talk to.'"

The result is inevitable. Dorothea becomes Mrs. Casaubon, and almost idolises the fusty student for taking her. Poor Dorothea! her enthusiasm is not wrong, it is only a little blind. And so she finds speedily after marriage what she ought to have thought of before, that learned researches, however fine and satisfying in themselves to the one person most concerned, are not sufficient to meet the cravings of a warm and enthusiastic nature. Mr. Casaubon was a man of one idea, and in the regions of the affections proved lamentably deficient: Dorothea, besides a vast amount of reverence for the great and wise, was endowed with strong affections, which were gradually but sorely wounded by her husband. What Middlemarch generally, or her friends in particular, had chosen to say of the marriage, she would have treated lightly, but to learn that her ideal was not so lofty as she had anticipated, was to her like drinking of the wells of Marah. Mr. Casaubon, too, speedily finds his young wife rather an embarrassment than otherwise, and in addition to this is racked by the dread that after all he will not be able to accomplish the vast work he has set himself to perform. Then, matters are still further complicated by the appearance of Will Ladislav on the scene; the genial, witty, but light artist, who speaks in derogatory terms of Mr. Casaubon, and draws from Dorothea such clever but useless reproofs as, "Failure after long perseverance is much grander than never to have a striving good enough to be called a failure." Then comes that time which only the pen of a George Eliot could describe—it is so intensely miserable and sad—the time when the distance widens between husband and wife; when the disparity which exists between them in every respect is more keenly appreciated by both. Finally, in the midst of a misunderstanding arrives the tragic end of Mr. Casaubon, the only end which could possibly straighten a path of life so crooked. But while this drama has been proceeding, other characters have not been idle. Celia, Dorothea's sister, has married Sir James Chettam, and the two are well matched, for it is the happy privilege of your mediocrities to enjoy blessedness after their kind.



We are further introduced to many other inhabitants of Middlemarch, and so graphically are the various scenes and persons brought under our notice that we seem to know the borough-town perfectly. We are familiar with its people, and could walk in and out amongst them, and through the streets, without any doubt or difficulty. The rival doctors are ably described in a few sentences; the same may be said of Mr. Bambridge the horsedealer, who is reported to have been "given to indulgence—chiefly in swearing, drinking, and beating his wife." The veterinary surgeon and the auctioneer are also easy of identification. Further, there is no other author who could enchain the reader's attention for the space of one hundred and fifty pages over such a trivial incident as the election of a chaplain to a hospital; yet not one line is wasted here. A second love-story is presented in the volumes, but like the other, it is very sad. Mr. Lydgate, the clever surgeon, with a lofty ideal, finds himself ensnared by the beautiful Rosamond Vincy, who is utterly incapable of appreciating his desires to lead a life which shall be removed from that of the ordinary practitioner. If she can have a thousand a year, and thereby keep her carriage, her ambition is satiated. When that fails, she fails utterly as a helpmeet for her struggling husband. One of the best characters in "*Middlemarch*" is Mr. Caleb Garth, who would injure no man if he could help it, "even," said he, "if I thought God winked at it;" and we are not much surprised to find his good-nature imposed upon by Fred Vincy, who at first threatens to turn out a scapegrace, but whose love for good Mary Garth, being returned, proves his safeguard.

Caleb Garth is one of the most admirable, solid characters in fiction—a noble, upright, and downright Englishman. The fortunes of Will Ladislaw are devious, and in making him at the last the husband of such a woman as Dorothea, George Eliot somewhat raises our anger. He is not good enough for her, though he is far above the ordinary youth of ability and parts. We were doubtless spoilt on having such unapproachable excellence as Dorothea's set before us in the outset. Apart from these portions of the story are single character sketches, all carefully done, and drawn with boldness and vigour. Mr. Brooke, Mrs. Cadwallader, Mr. Farebrother, and Mr. Featherstone are perfect in their way; but the portrait of Mr. Bulstrode, the religious banker, who is a hypocrite without being aware of the fact, is most powerful. Besides the tragic interest thrown around his history, the author has expended some of her most careful limning upon his features. While a subsidiary character, the impressions with regard to him left upon the reader's mind, after a study of the book, are of the most distinct and prominent description. The most unsatisfactory character in the whole narrative is doubtless Ladislaw. Though the author might claim that she intended him to be such, certainly his feebleness is aggravated by being



placed in opposition to Dorothea. It is not likely that her happiness could be as profound as it might be even when she became united to the volatile artist. It is noticeable about George Eliot, however, that she makes those individuals who are only capable of a restricted amount of happiness obtain and enjoy such happiness to their utmost limits, whilst those whose depths of need are so much greater never find satisfaction. They come, on the contrary, far, far short of their ideal. This novel, like many others of the same author, has repeated references to religious beliefs, and there is the utter scorn of cant which distinguishes George Eliot visible again and again. The satire is not malicious, but it is very effective, and is most cutting to those who are brought under the lash. She speaks of some who try "to conciliate piety and worldliness, the nothingness of this life and the desirability of cut-glass, the consciousness at once of filthy rags and the best damask." We know the people well; we have seen them ourselves dissolved in tears at the condition of the heathen, and anxious to do something for Christ, if it be only to forward a contribution of cheap tracts. All such people find no mercy at her hands, but those who are fighting inwardly with the deepest soul-problems, are sympathised with to the uttermost. Yet the whole lesson of the novel, for such, is very dispiriting. There is desire to help, and unfeigned compassion, but little substantial aid in clearing away the dark, overhanging clouds of doubt. A sceptic, in the generally understood sense, George Eliot is not; whether she has any pronounced religious belief or no we know not. Judging from "*Middlemarch*" alone, we should incline to the negative, and certainly for the man who is struggling for the light there is no real aid. It leaves him precisely where it found him, with this immaterial distinction—that he discovers there is at least one large heart which beats sympathetically for him, though it is powerless to direct him to rest. Even the finest character in the book, Dorothea, is represented as without religion, and whereas in her previous works—or some of them at least—George Eliot has distinctly taught that trust in a Higher Power is the last and final help and safety for the human soul, there is no hint of it in her last great novel. True, there are comparisons to Saint Theresa, but this is only the more surprising, for who can conceive of an exalted woman without that higher kind of religiosity which lifts her away from the world and up to the Highest? Naturally, woman is more reverential than man, and accepting George Eliot's portrait of Dorothea, with all the side lights thrown upon it in the story, it does seem strange that remembering her strong cravings after the highest good, she should not have thought of that Fulness, whose existence and accessibility George Eliot expressly teaches in other works which are in every respect inferior to this. No life with Faith can be a failure. And by this Faith we mean no belief in a religious creed, but that influence

operating upon the human soul which causes it to say in the moments of its supremest anguish,—

“Oh, yet we trust that somehow good  
Will be the final goal of ill,  
To pangs of nature, sins of will,  
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood ;

“That nothing walks with aimless feet ;  
That not one life shall be destroyed,  
Or cast as rubbish to the void,  
When God hath made the pile complete.”

And, indeed, in the closing words of her masterpiece in fiction, George Eliot points almost to the same thing, though in a shadowy and indistinct manner. This is the passage, beautiful and eloquent in expression, referring to Dorothea, as we lose sight of her in the two concluding sentences—possibly correcting an opinion which the author might think she had previously germinated as to the aimlessness of life :—

“Her finely-touched spirit had still its fine issues, though they were not widely visible. Her full nature, like that river of which Alexander broke the strength, spent itself in channels which had no great name on the earth. But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive : for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts ; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.”

Having now noticed some of the characters in this wonderful book, it is very interesting to turn to its philosophy for a moment. And how profound this is ! George Eliot has said more good things in this one work, and in the best possible manner, than have been uttered by the entire band, we had almost said, of contemporary novelists. Admirably is this expressed, for instance :

“That is a rare and blessed lot which some greatest men have not attained, to know ourselves guiltless before a condemning crowd ; to be sure that what we are denounced for is solely the good in us. The pitiable lot is that of the man who could not call himself a martyr even though he were to persuade himself that the men who stoned him were but ugly passions incarnate—who knows that he is stoned, not for professing the right, but for not being the man he professed to be.”

It has been objected that the wisdom which flows from the lips of such characters as Mr. Featherstone in “Middlemarch,” is of too superior an order to proceed from country squires and village inhabitants generally. But those who make this objection can have had little experience of northern wit. In one or two counties the keenness of mother wit is not only remarkable, but the words in which it is clothed are of the most telling and vivid description. It does not surprise us to hear, for instance, that old Featherstone is reported

to have said—"There's one thing I made out pretty clear when I used to go to church, and it's this: God A'mighty sticks to the land. He promises land, and He gives land, and He makes chaps rich with corn and cattle." Such sayings as this we have ourselves repeatedly heard, and an hour's conversation with the apparently untutored boor in certain districts which could be specified would fill a note-book with shrewd and searching things. If there be exaggeration in the dialogue of "Middlemarch," we should not look for it in the quarter just indicated, but rather in the conversations and reflections of persons who are somewhat high in the social scale. But take the author for all in all, and it is questionable whether any other example could be cited where the various individuals speak more as they ought to speak, and not either above or beneath themselves.

There is a character in "As you Like it" who is described as being able to find

"Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
Sermons in stones, and good in everything."

Such a person we should imagine George Eliot to be; at least she exhibits the marvellous faculty of being able to get at the heart of things; and could the cold and senseless granite preserve a secret in its most innate recesses, hers would be the power that could extract it, and bare it to the gaze of the world. The wonder is that so much reflectiveness as she possesses should be united to so many other qualities which make that reflectiveness of use to mankind. She has not only the gift of thought but the genius of interpretation. The happy blending of these two was never seen in such perfection as in the novel which we have last noticed. No apprehensiveness lest the novelist should be lost in the philosopher or the student of science alarms us: on the contrary, the ripened thought which gives substance to "Middlemarch" is food which should be recommended for study to less worthy purveyors of fiction. We have tinsel supplied as pure gold, and the flash of the true metal is borrowed by those who make a little thought go a very long way: in fact, we are astonished when we have separated and laid aside the meretricious charms of exciting situation and plot, what a little mental pabulum proceeds from the average modern novelist. There was some fear at one time that our author would sink into the rank of those of whom we have just spoken, and it is matter for great congratulation that in her study of provincial life she has reasserted her pre-eminence. It is the old power again of true genius touching with undying interest the people of common life. Master spirits never have to go in search of the *bizarre* or the extraordinary: their materials are at hand; they are found in the daisy, the corn-field, the woods, the cattle, and in unnoted and unnoticeable fellow men. Humanity, after all, is not greater than its poorest unit. Not absolutely and essentially greater; for the emotion of the peasant is as

true and touching as that of the king. Our masters are those who can make us feel the dignity of the one as truly as that of the other. It is the business of George Eliot to recall us to the knowledge of the fact that the commonest and meanest events of life are really as powerful for good, if used properly by us, as the greatest. But the tragedy which is enacted at our very doors causes us no concern: it is the tragedy round which is thrown the glamour of magnificence or romance which moves us. Why should this be so? As the author says:—"We do not expect people to be deeply moved by what is not unusual. That element of tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency has not yet wrought itself into the coarse emotion of mankind: and perhaps our frames could hardly bear much of it." Would it not rather be healthful if we would compel ourselves to bear more of it? There could be no surer way of eliciting sympathy than that which would come from an initiation into the sufferings and miseries of those whom we have been accustomed to treat as strangers, and from whom we have turned, on perceiving them, to "pass by on the other side." Thus, in this story of "*Middlemarch*," and in others by the same hand, is taught in numberless instances, and in a more effective though less direct method than by pulpit or platform, that great lesson of practical benevolence which is one of the principal needs of the time. The moment we are compelled to give hearing and consideration to a man, that moment we are on the road to understand him—possibly to make him understand himself,—and it is a greater thing to cause individuals and society to appreciate their needs, in order that they may thereafter grapple with them themselves, than it is blindly to administer to those needs from a merely charitable impulse.

Having now passed in review the works upon which George Eliot's fame has been established, there yet remains another class of her writings to be looked at, viz., her poetry. When she published "*The Spanish Gypsy*," it was but one more attempt to prove the position which is so often assumed, that genius is universal. But if this be true, and there is no opportunity to reason here for or against the thesis—we have had another instance afforded by our author that it is only true as regards the very highest intellects. A calm consideration of this poem, or story in prose, will, we think, lead the unbiassed mind to the conclusion that George Eliot is not a poet. Her eye is far seeing, but not *all*-seeing; and without this latter no poet was ever great. Neither, too, has she any of that fire which should burn through the form of words in which a poet's ideas are clothed. Of course, on the appearance of "*The Spanish Gypsy*" there were those who at once asserted in their haste that its author had taken her position in the ranks of the greatest poets. Modern critics have made rapid progress in the manipulation of the superlative adjective. It is flung about freely without the slightest discrimination, till criticism is in danger of becoming degraded, and passing from an art into an artifice. With respect to George

Eliot's principal essay in poetry, a more deliberate judgment has supervened since the excitement manifested on its production, and though now regarded as an excellent piece of workmanship it is not accepted as lofty poetry—if indeed it be poetry at all. Strong as the assertion may seem, a few lyrics of Shelley or Campbell, or of any others who possessed the real bardic fire, are worth the whole of this long poem. George Eliot is too self-possessed to be a poet; she lacks the abandonment, we had almost said that touch of divine madness, necessary to the production of that character. Her poems stand in the same relation to true poetry as statues to living, breathing human beings. The form is there, graceful and regular, the features are beautifully chiselled, but the soul is absent. Her creations are like the marble, cold; they are *life-like*, but without life. The fact is, she is critical but not musical. There is not sufficient song in her to constitute a poet. It would be idle here to raise again that much-vexed question, what is poetry? Different answers given, would be as unlike in their expression as the persons giving them, but the essence of the replies would be the same—that poetry is very largely Melody, Song. A poet without music may be compared to a lark without voice—only the sham of the thing for which we have sought. It is not the cutting up of prose into measure that makes poetry; this is just as fallacious as to suppose that all poetry must take the form of verse. Cadence may help the effect, but the soul of music can find expression in plain prose as well as in regular feet. These may seem obvious remarks, but when once the idea they embody is grasped, it will be felt why George Eliot fails to be a poet. Her blank verse is perfect as regards form; it is also, in divers instances, majestic, but it never masters us. We, like the author, are calm as we read, whilst the musical chords of our being which should be touched by the poet, and invariably are when it is a master who plays, are never reached. Occasionally, there is a passage to remind us of the quaint old poets, for its conceit and beauty, as when Fedalma says:—

“ Perhaps the wind  
Wails so in winter for the summers dead,  
And all sad sounds are nature's funeral cries  
For what has been and is not.”

But if “Hamlet” be a great poem, or “Faust” be a great poem, then assuredly “The Spanish Gypsy” is not. The rush of life is absent from the drama as a whole, and the lyrics, though carefully constructed, are but successful imitations of what lyrics ought to be. “Jubal” and “Armgar” we should prefer to the more ambitious attempt of the author, but even these fail to convince us that they are fine poetry. In one sense they are nearer to it than “The Spanish Gypsy,” for the author has not weighted herself with a long story in verse—they are continuous bursts of rhetoric, which, having one grand idea as their basis, seem now and then to glow with poetic

fire. But when their writer attempts more she fails. She immediately begins to construct, and ceases to create. It is this power to create possessed in the stupendous degree in which it has been sometimes given to the world, which singles out the great poet. All its characteristics cannot be explained, but it is certain to be recognised. The illiterate can perceive it as well as the learned. It is God Almighty's patent. All lofty singers possess it, and it becomes their passport to immortality. This patent George Eliot does not possess.

Endeavouring now to indicate the most salient features of this remarkable writer's spirit or genius, undoubtedly one of the prominent abiding impressions left upon us is her sadness. She is touched with a profound sorrow for the whole human race; she individualizes humanity and declares it to be miserable and unhappy. Her books are almost over-weighted with sadness. This is one of those psychological considerations to which we have already made reference as preventing her from ranking with the few restricted spirits who are accepted as our greatest novelists. Do what she will, the burden is ever present with her, and even in the most humorous passages in her novels, the condition of the author's mind forces itself through, till the wit is now and again tinged with bitterness, and more frequently still with melancholy. The projection out of self which should distinguish the highest artist is not exhibited in perfection in George Eliot; we can see her in all her creations, or at least she is standing by our side, and she is not always impartial. In every book there are individuals to whom she tenderly clings, and upon whom she expends especial kindness and consideration. One of such characters, whom she has taken under the wing of her affectionate protection, is Maggie Tulliver. And others could be cited, where, we presume, the author found some affinity between their spirits and her own, the result being an unmistakeable pity and compassion in the drawing of the character. It is really not so much the character itself, but the mind of the author working in it, which affects us as we proceed. And yet this sadness, from whose power over her genius the author is not able to get clear, is very beautiful. It is only the good or the great who know how to be sad. The sadness of a philanthropist or a philosopher is a very deep feeling—one of the strongest of all emotions. George Eliot is a mixture of the two. She perceives the weight of human misery, and her powerlessness to lift it from the mind afflicts her greatly. Many writers are able to touch the principal common chords of humanity, but the power she possesses is an uncommon one of touching those minor subtle tones out of which springs the truest pathos. Lord Macaulay has some observations on Byron which seem to be a digest of the lives of many of the characters in the novels of our author. He says, "Year after year, and month after month, he continued to repeat that to be wretched is the destiny of all; that to be eminently wretched is the destiny of the eminent; that all the desires by which we are cursed

alike lead to misery ; if they are not gratified, to the misery of disappointment ; if they are gratified, to the misery of satiety. His heroes are men who have arrived by different roads at the same goal of despair, who are sick of life, who are at war with society, who are supported in their anguish only by an unconquerable pride resembling that of Prometheus on the rock, or of Satan in the burning marl, who can master their agonies by the force of their will, and who to the last defy the whole power of earth and heaven." This attitude on the part of Byron towards the world was of course the outcome of a nature which was essentially misanthropical ; but when we find a similar despair shrouding the characters of George Eliot it is the result of hopelessness. The miserable, whining tone is absent ; the tragedy here is not simulated, but real. The principal sufferers are those who have heroically striven, and who bear about them evidences of the struggle. It is not your Sir James Chettam, your amiable nonentity, who is called upon to endure most—Providence has but little glory to get, it would almost appear, in afflicting such as he—it is your spirits like Dorothea, which are bound in a sphere too narrow and too gross, and who are taught to feel the insufficiency and unsatisfying nature of the lot which has been assigned them. It is these who are in the toils of Fate, and for whom there is no escape. Even the power to do a good deed, or to exhibit the nobleness of their natures, is frequently denied them, and their susceptibilities prove a hindrance. They long to do and to bear ; and it is this very desire for Sacrificial enterprise which throws about their lives such strong pathetic interest. What soul could regard unmoved the passionate longings of Dorothea Brooke to find some proper outlet for those restless energies surging within her ? And what greater suffering could there be than arises from the consciousness that the ideals we have set up have been really false—that the idols of our adoration have been mean and unworthy ! A hand may be cut off and the body remain sound and healthy, but the shattering of an ideal is only the introduction to a continuous regret. To change the simile, it is the breaking of the spirit from its moorings to be drifted hither and thither by adverse winds. It is worthy of notice how this sadness of George Eliot, of which we are speaking, seems to have deepened with the years. Each book as it was issued, from her very first published work, has shown a gradual growth of the feeling till it appears to have culminated in "*Middlemarch*." Now there is no hope. At first, through the sadness, there gleamed occasionally the bright star of faith. But it would almost seem at length to be quenched in midnight. After Dorothea the most painfully tried of all George Eliot's characters—excepting, perhaps also Romola and Maggie Tulliver—is Janet Dempster. But when George Eliot was less philosophical she was more hopeful. The misery of Janet was not allowed to go unalleviated. Mr. Tryan, the dying minister, said to her as he passed away, " You have a sure trust in God. I shall



not look for you in vain at the last." And George Eliot makes Janet able to say, "No, no. I shall be there. God will not forsake me." To many it will seem that if at the other extremity of the author's literary life she could have given to Dorothea Brooke a trust like this in a Higher Power, her life would not be left so hard and terrible as it is now drawn. Janet said, "The Divine Presence did not now seem far off, when she had not wings to reach it; prayer itself seemed superfluous in those moments of calm trust." This, surely, was a higher condition of mind than Dorothea, that yet grand and noble character, ever attained. It is some such looking for the light and not apprehending it, which has begotten in all readers such a sublime pity for her.

But we cannot linger to discuss this point; suffice it to say—and we note it principally as a curious and interesting fact in the development of our author's mind—we believe the conscientious reader will find the assertion true, that between her earliest work and her latest and finest, there is a wide distinction in the treatment of the sacred question of belief. In the former, the most simple and absolute faith is given to the principal character as the highest good, and the solution of the woes of the afflicted and distressed spirit; in the latter it seems to be withheld where, at least, taking George Eliot's former view of things, it was as deeply needed. Had Dorothea Brooke been possessed, in addition to her splendid nature, of the one element which was given to Janet Dempster, it will appear to most persons that she would have been, perhaps, the most perfect, as she is now one of the very noblest, characters in fiction.

Scarcely inferior, after this sadness, in the impression it leaves upon the mind, as a noticeable characteristic of George Eliot, is her observation. Of course, to some extent, every novelist must possess this faculty, and he would be a poor story-teller who sat down to write without it. But there is no parade in the exhibition of the quality by the author of "Middlemarch." Easy and natural, she can describe a farmyard with as minute and faithful a pencil as she can draw character. Nothing escapes her, and her power is equally great over the aggregate and the single. The scenery of the Midlands does not afford scope for sublime descriptions; the massive is almost entirely absent, but the beautiful is everywhere, and of this George Eliot is cognizant. An inferior artist would fail to interest us where she enlists the attention, and invariably preserves it. Take the sketches of Raveloe, Milby, Shepperton, and others, and where can there be found more accurate painting? The author has been the connecting link between us and that village life which we can no more forget and obliterate from the memory than we can those records which are more personal. One objection, which at first sight seems to have some force, is brought against these writings, and that is, that they are restricted in their scope. While *facile princeps* in dealing with village life, the author has given us too few glimpses whereby to test her powers in depicting the scenes and people of the great hives of popu-



lation. But there is abundant evidence to prove that here, too, she would be at home. In "Romola" we witness a distinct class of work from that in all her other novels, but it is to a large extent satisfactory. Where she fails—if she fail at all—it is when she has not had full opportunity of study. But there is scarcely a book which could be named that shows so much of pure observation alone as "Middlemarch." Leave aside for a moment its subjectiveness, all that wonderful analysis of character which has given it a name and a place for ever, and the outer impressions of the village and its inhabitants are perfect and complete. We can grasp clearly the personal appearance of the various characters. It is a book that is complete all round. There are scenes and places hit off by only just a few words, such as in the ride to Stone Court, where a midland landscape in all its quiet beauty is put upon the canvas; everything speaks to a mind like the author's. The language of the fields, the rivers, and the woods is no sealed one to her. And as she herself says of those aspects of scenery, "these are the things that make the gamut of joy in landscape to midland-bred souls—the things they toddled among, or perhaps learned by heart standing between their father's knees while he drove leisurely." The fund of enjoyment for the observant eye must indeed be profound and a perpetual spring of refreshing. The art of depicting scenery is rarely found in a very eminent degree, and certainly seldom in those who have other pronounced qualifications for the novelist. George Eliot is one of the few who possess this rare gift.

But her power of description is far excelled by a more extraordinary endowment still—viz., her humour. Whilst its quality is scarcely definable, it is all her own, as in the case of every great master. We should never, for instance, confound the humour of Dickens with that of Thackeray, or that of George Eliot with either. In the last named it is like a silver stream meandering through the lovely meadows of her thought,—bright, pleasant, and beautifying. If it is not deep, searching or scathing, it is very seldom coarse. The geniality derivable from her being so thoroughly *en rapport* with her characters lends its influence to her humour, and mostly, though not uniformly, makes it pleasant and agreeable. We laugh without malice at the foibles of her creations, and at their personal idiosyncracies. Mrs. Poyser is, in her way, equal to any humorous conception in the language. She is truer than Mrs. Gamp, and quite as original. Her sayings alone suffice to make "Adam Bede" one of the most mirth-suggestive books in the language. Mark a few of the reflections:

"It seems as if them as aren't wanted here are th' only folks as aren't wanted i' th' other world."

"There's folks 'ud hold a sieve under the pump and expect to carry away the water."

"If you could make a puddin' wi' thinking o' th' batter, it 'ud be easy getting dinner."

"It's poor work allays settin' the dead above the livin'. It's but little good you'll do a-wat'ring th' last year's crop."

"I often think it's wi' th' old folks as it is wi' th' babbies; it's God Almighty's way o' quietenin' 'em, I reckon, afore they go to sleep."

"I aren't like a bird clapper, forced to make a rattle when the wind blows on me. I can keep my own counsel when there's no good i' speaking."

"It's hard work to tell which is Old Harry when everybody's got boots on."

"The men are mostly so slow, their thoughts overrun 'em, an' they can only catch 'em by the tail. I can count a stocking top while a man's gettin's tongue ready; an' when he outs wi' his speech at last, there's little broth to be made out. It's your dead chicks take the longest hatchin'. However, I'm not denyin' the women are foolish: God Almighty made 'em to match the men."

"I know what the men like—a poor soft, as 'ud simper at 'em like the pictur o' the sun. Whether they did right or wrong, an' say thank you for a kick, an' pretend she didna know which end she stood uppermost, till her husband told her. That's what a man wants in a wife mostly; he wants to make sure o' one fool as 'ull tell him he's wise."

"Some folk's tongues are like the clocks as run on strikin', not to tell you the time o' day, but because there's summat wrong i' their own inside."

These examples are just taken at random from the brilliant stores of one novel. Mr. Martin Poyser, in having his destiny united to such a woman as Mrs. Poyser, must have been continually conscious that he was labouring under an *embarras de richesses*. There is nothing forced, however, about this woman's wit; it seems to flow as naturally from her mind as music does from the throat of a bird. Bitter as she now and then could be, there was a deep fount of goodness behind her caustic expressions. She could not help being humorous—it was her normal condition, and consequent on a formidable endowment of sarcasm. Now and then George Eliot is a little forced and unpleasant in her humour, as when she makes Mrs. Tulliver say to her husband, whilst she is airing some sheets at the fire, "They aren't the best sheets, but they're good enough for anybody to sleep in, be he who he will; for as for them best Holland sheets, I should repent buying 'em, only they'll do to lay us out in. An' if you was to die to-morrow, Mr. Tulliver, they're mangled beautiful, an' all ready, an' smell o' lavender as it 'ud be a pleasure to lay 'em out; an' they lie at the left-hand corner o' the big oak linen-chest at the back: not as I should trust anybody to look 'em out but myself." We are inclined to think Mr. Tulliver would agree with us that his wife's wit had a decidedly unpleasant and personal turn occasionally. These are instances of individual humour, but sometimes a whole scene is presented to us which is saturated with the quality. Such a one is that at the Rainbow in Raveloe, where a discussion takes place upon a certain red Durham cow, and it is made the occasion for the author to draw in her unique manner, and with a vivid pleasantry which keeps us in constant but subdued laughter, a series of some half-dozen portraits of well-known inhabitants of the village. The mirthfulness does not consist of jokes, but

rather of the reproduction of the quaintnesses of human nature, and the appearance is so perfect, so true, that we cannot help but smile. Mellowlier than that of almost any author, the humour is also as tender generally as it is rich.

Other excellences of George Eliot, which thickly strew all the pages she has written, we have no space to dilate upon ; such, for instance, as her keen appreciation of beauty in all its forms, and her teaching again and again that it is worthy of reverence with all other portions of the Divine economy of things ; her enjoyment of Nature, which must be intense and profound. Her possession of these senses could surely be demonstrated without difficulty ; nay, are they not concurrently apparent to every reader of her works ? There is, however, one other striking characteristic of her genius, to which some collateral reference has already been made, but which should be insisted upon more emphatically now. That is her sympathy. It is impossible to take up any one of her works without being struck, perhaps primarily, with this thought—how truly this writer has lived and felt ! The histories she has written are no soulless records ; they breathe with real, warm life ; how could they do otherwise when, if it may be thus expressed, their author is so proficient in the use of the stethoscope of the human heart. Romola, Dorothea, Adam Bede, Tito, Silas Marner, Maggie Tulliver, are not mere names ; they are existences as positive and palpable as our own. We have had their souls laid bare before us ; the coat of mail in which men and women resolutely attempt to encase themselves has been removed in all these people, and we know them almost as they knew themselves. In very few writers has this marvellous faculty of penetration been so powerful. And it is the product of the intensely sympathetic nature which the author possesses. Her fellow-men are to George Eliot brothers and sisters for whom she has a yearning, and whose existence, when sorrowful, she would endeavour to make light. The world's battle is, in one sense, the same to all. Men may fight in different quarters of the great field, and under different conditions and auspices, but wherever humanity is found there is pain. The conflict is never easy ; perhaps least so where it seems most enviable. "Every heart knoweth its own bitterness." Daily is the truth of the old saying attested. George Eliot must have realized it ere she could have written again and again words instinct with the most potent and beautiful sympathy. She holds it to be nobler to suffer and to conquer than never to suffer at all. He who has never been tried or tempted must be as the mole or the bat, blind to the vast depths and capabilities of his nature, and feeling vaguely that there is something somewhere which he ought to do to approve his spirit. But such are not the characters whom our author has drawn. It is strange what a little light beams upon the lives of her best heroes and heroines ; they are called to endure, and it would seem frequently to be the teaching of the novelist that in their very suffering and endurance there is safety.

"By these ye are saved," is a doctrine she would again and again appear to affirm.

If there be one phase of her nature in which she does not meet the need of the times it is in her utter hopelessness. Humanity, in all its stern reality, endeavour, and failure, she realizes with amazing truthfulness and power; but for the humanity which, we hope, is to be, she has not enough of a New Gospel to communicate. The old truths she has illuminated with vivid and matchless skill; but she does not advance a new evangel. Her grand influences are finding vent in such books as the one she has just given to the public, but she does not stretch forth into that dim and uncertain future which causes all the thinking spirits of the time such deep concern. Are we to receive much more from her hand, or is "*Middlemarch*" to be almost the last great work which her genius will present to us? Of such quality very few books are, or could be, written; if its author delights us with others (and who but wishes this may be the fortunate lot of her readers) they too will be epoch works, quite as distinguished as their predecessor, though, perchance, in an altogether different line. George Eliot cannot remain where she is; brilliant as "*Middlemarch*" is, it is not the legitimate end of such a literary career as hers. It points to a changing phase of thought, and we shall mark with more than ordinary curiosity its author's next appearance. The generation, we feel convinced, demands more than it found in that work. Ample justice has been accorded to its wonderful perfection of style, and its undoubted originality of thought; but, however these may satisfy the intellectual cravings of the age, there is still a deeper depth to be touched by the author who would leave an indelible and an ever-deepening impression upon the century. There is a stretching out of the hands after some good which has not yet been apprehended; despair is not the predominant feeling of the times, though the vast failures of man to attain the ends which he knows to be highest have impressed, to a large extent, our best and finest spirits with some such feeling. It may not be George Eliot's mission to raise us altogether from this condition of things; we should be afraid that her own nature is too sympathetic with human nature generally, as it exists, to enable her to do this; but her work has been, on the whole, pure, true, and noble. There is scarcely any writer to whom we could point, who, when in danger of sinking into the level mediocrity of novelists, has so suddenly emancipated herself from the narrow trammels of conventionality, as she has by her last effort. It is to be desired that the promise thus held forth will be fulfilled. Should this prove to be the case, George Eliot cannot but be regarded—and without undue pressure of justice—as one of the principal literary phenomena of the age.

GEORGE BARNETT SMITH.

## MARGARET AND ELIZABETH.

By KATHERINE SAUNDERS,

AUTHOR OF "GIDEON'S ROCK."

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CAPTAIN HECTOR BROWNE'S JOURNAL—(CONTINUED).

### PART IV.

You can think, Margaret, what I felt when I heard that name. I could at first hardly believe it. My ears, I thought, must sure have deceived me. And yet, as I looked at the chap, I could not help feeling that if ever a pair seemed made for each other it was our 'Lizbeth and this man. The four years, too! I knew that was just about the time Joshua Vandereck was thought to have been drowned.

I watched, with feelings I cannot tell you, the grand preparations of the natives for their hunting excursion. How slow they seemed! I thought they would never, never start.

At last they set off, and now a piece of good fortune, such as I had never dreamt of—never thought of—befel me—us, governor, I may say. The women and children, and old men, who were to be left at home, in their admiration of their warriors, followed them round the corner of a cliff, which hid their prisoner from their sight for a minute or two.

I could not resist the temptation. My heart beating against the rock like a sledge-hammer, I leaned over and said softly,

"Mate!"

Ah! you should have seen him turn like one in a dream. And then you should have seen his eyes fix on me and get bigger and bigger; and then you should have seen his spring—a regular tiger's spring it was—at the cliff behind which I stood. He could never have climbed it in cool blood, I am certain of that; and then if I had not caught him by the arm as he came dash against the rock he would have had a fall from which he would never have risen.

I can tell you nothing more of the beginning of our acquaintance after the tiger's spring—nothing except running, running, running all through a scorching day, and tramping, tramping all through a damp, dark night, over scorpions, lizards, rats, and I don't know what. We hardly spoke a word all that day and all that night.

Sometimes he'd find breath to say to me,

"We'll stick together, mate!"

And I'd say,

"Ay, ay."

And sometimes *I'd* find breath to say to *him*,

"We'll stick together, mate?"

And *he'd* say,

"Ay, ay."

That was all we said while our race for life was going on; yet I wonder if two men ever knew each other better or felt more towards one another, governor, than you and I did that second night when we dared to lie down in the forest to sleep.

What a race that was, governor! What frights we had! How often we saw the whole tribe of natives coming suddenly upon us in those files of trees! We did not dare cook anything. We lived on what we could find growing in the forests. The governor knew better than me the uses of things there. I might have starved over and over again before I should have found out the roots and things he knew of.

A most miraculous and merciful chance had led us to take quite an opposite direction to the hunting party. I had intentionally made for the direction of my old home. But our fear of meeting the natives had made us turn about a hundred times and lose all count of the way we had come.

It was on the third day of our wandering that I told Joshua Vandereck what I knew about his wife, and that he told me his own adventures.

We were resting in the evening under a tree, and were in mortal fear, all the time we were talking, of being discovered by the natives.

I need not tell you what I said to him of 'Lizbeth's kindness to you, Margaret; or how he listened, saying now and then, but in such a different way from what he had said it before, among the savages,—

"I see—I see!" or,

"Ay, ay! that's 'Lizbeth; yes."

And then he began to tell me his own story.

I wonder am I right or wrong, Margaret, when I feel, as I do feel at times, that we shall all—you, Elizabeth, and myself—listen to that story of Joshua's again and again, told by his own lips in his own way, which is so clever and booklike to my poor way. *You* will and Elizabeth; yes, no doubt; but as for me, have I not put between me and a peaceful English fireside that which is wider than the ocean and more dangerous than the storm? I wonder how I dare to hope as I do at times.

It was curious to see the governor—Joshua Vandereck, I mean—suddenly break off now and then, and stare at my face, as if he remembered all at once it was a stranger he was holding forth to. But the pattering down of a nut, or the squeak of a young monkey

being chastised, or the least stirring of the great leaves above us, would bring our danger to our minds, and make one clutch the other's arm and look in the other's face, as if we had been friends for years.

So, reckoning on your some day hearing the whole from Vandereck himself, I will miss the many little things which he told me that I know would have no interest if not told by himself.

Joshua began like this :—

"How did I get out here? That's the question, friend-in-need, isn't it?"

Then he sat, moving his great fingers as if he had a pipe to fill (which he had not), and looking straight away before him, as if the four lonely years he had spent there stood in his light, like the tall tree trunks; and he had to look hard to see what was behind them. When he did see things he wanted to see you could tell he saw them plain and clear—he like felt them over again. Sometimes he seemed to see himself in a very bad light indeed; for he would shake his head, and point with his closed finger and thumb as if he was pointing with a pipe, and say,—

"Yes, yes, yes; that's Josh Vandereck. Lazy dog! There he is, large as life!"

"There he is," says he; and this is how he began. "I can see you, Josh, a child, fat, and lazy, and contented, sprawling on the beach in the sunshine, while your mother spread her clothes to dry. Yes, I see—I see! And I can see you, a great, hulking lad, fat, and lazy, and contented still, fishing in the little boat, and feeling as though the sun shone on purpose to warm you, and the sea rolled on purpose to rock you, and the fish were made on purpose to fill your net. Yes, I see—I see!"

"Ah! you're a man now, are you? More fat, and more lazy, and more contented than ever, though you've nothing in the world but your bit of a fishing-smack and the cottage the old folks have left you. Yes, yes; you've lost 'em both at a blow, one within a week of the other—all you had in the world. Parents three-score and ten years old. They had climbed up the hill, you see, and gone down it together so far that when the old man had to quicken his steps and go before her, she could go no more without him; a sudden sickness came upon her, and, as I may say, she fell the rest of the way, so sudden was her going. And even that, you see—even that loss, the loss of all—didn't break Josh Vandereck down! Not it, not it!"

And Joshua pointed as with the pipe he didn't hold, and shook his head with a sort of sorrowful contempt for himself.

"Live on—eat on—loungue on—trouble for nothing—enjoy everything. There's Josh! Lazy dog! There he is, large as life!"

"Ah! I see—I see!" and Joshua's eyes seemed to be dodging



something round the trees, as he looked far away into them; and I wish you could have seen how they twinkled, and how the red sunlight shone in them, and looked like a drop of blood coming up from his heart into them as he spoke.

"Look you, friend-in-need," says he. "I, Josh Vandereck, can tumble out into my little boat and row ashore on a broiling hot Sunday afternoon, and lounge up the village street with my hands in the pockets of my old workaday clothes to disgrace her by hanging about the little chapel door."

And he pointed again and shook his head, and looked really as though he saw all he was telling me actually taking place behind those forest trees.

"Yes," he says; "and I can see the prim, small chapel, with the door so little and lowly that, like heaven's door, only children can pass through it without humbling the head. Ah! I see it; and I see myself lounging past it to and fro; and inside they sing *Dies ira*, and outside I whistle 'Caller Herring.' I am the disgrace of the parish, and the sanctified people turn their eyes away from me in disgust as they come out. What do I care? Not a rush! The best and holiest of them all is coming presently. My eyes, ears, heart—look, listen, beat for her, only her. Ay, and here she is; and I sun myself in the light of her face, little caring for the holy thoughts that make the light. I see it grow more light and more holy at the sight of me, scamp as I am. The very flower I gather her as we go home through the fields, she thinks good enough to be laid in the leaves of her bible. Ah! those Sundays!—those Sundays!

"What has this to do with how I came here?" says Joshua, after he had been quiet a little while. "Friend-in-need, it *has* to do with it. I cannot see how I came here without seeing all this first; nor do I think you could understand the end of the tale without hearing the beginning. If she had been hard to win, and exacting and proud to me, I can't say but I might have been a better man. She should," he says, with a choking in his throat, "she should have made me toil for her and wait for her, in the old Jacob and Rachel way; but as it was, she gave me her love as freely and generously as the sun gives its light to the sea. We never had a word, she and I—never a hasty word betwixt us—from the first time I saw her till the last. There's something about true love never running smooth; but, between you and I, friend-in-need, there are a good many fools that prefer to have it rough, and *will* make it rough, if it's ever so smooth. It's nothing to some without your opposing currents, and gushings and gurglings, and frothing and flummery. But to run deep and to run strong, give me your steady, honest, outspoken love, given on both sides truly and fully, and received and believed on both sides truly and fully.

"There," says Joshua, beginning to laugh, "you didn't expect to hear an essay on love in — Islands, did you?"

"I wish I had heard it before, brother Izee," I answered him; "it's as good as a book to listen to you."

He went on.

"We were married. It never occurred to me that we were very poor, and I am sure it didn't trouble 'Lizbeth; we had enough to eat and drink, and to give to those in want who came to our door; but, none the less, our poverty, it seems, was a scandal and a grief to the neighbourhood. For a long time I was blind as a bat to all this. 'Lizbeth, being a woman, was, of course, the first to know her neighbours' minds. It quite took me by surprise when she began at me about it.

"It was one evening in summer time, when I was coming home at low tide with my shrimping net, and she had come to meet me. Ah! I see—I see! There are the sands all red in the sunset. There is my great lubberly self, bare-footed, hot, and lazy, laughing at her as she takes my net and carries it over her own shoulder.

"There is she, with her feet bare too, that she may not be afraid of coming as far as she pleases to meet me over the wet sands.

"Her bare feet, her free, sturdy step, her bonny face in the red glow, my net over her shoulder, I see her so best. I have seen her so these four—oh! isn't it four thousand?—years that I've been here on this"—and I am bound to relate that here the governor was not complimentary to the island.

"Well," says he, "as we are coming along—me, like a besotted fool, thinking she is as happy as myself—she says, quietly,—

"'Why hurry so, Josh? It is so pleasant here.'

"I said something about home being pleasanter still, and she said,—

"'Josh, look well at it; stop and look well at our home. Does it appear to you the same, or does it seem changed?'

"'Why, 'Lizbeth,' I said, 'is it changed to you? To me it is the same little paradise it has always been.'

"She stood still in front of me, and I saw that her eyes had tears in them. Over her shoulder she motioned with her disengaged hand towards home, and shook her head as she looked at me, firmly and sorrowfully.

"'Joshua,' says she, 'it is changed. The serpent has reared its head in our paradise, and I see an angel at the door forbidding our return, Joshua, to the old life of ease and happiness.'

"Then she was silent, and hung her head as I looked at her for the meaning of her serious words, and voice, and look.

"'In what form has the serpent come here, 'Liz?' I asked her.

"'In the form of a gossiping, scandal-bearing neighbour,' said she. 'But,' she went on, shaking her head sadly as I laughed, 'he brings

me the opinion of all about us, and I fear—oh ! Josh, I *know*, I *know*—there is truth in what they say.’

“ ‘What do they say, ‘Liz ?’ I asked her.

“She hung her head again, and coloured ; then suddenly looked up at me, inspired, ennobled, radiant with—what, friend-in-need ?—a fib that had occurred to her.

“ ‘They say this, Josh,’ she answered me. ‘They say among themselves, “Look at that fine fellow, Joshua Vandereck, with all the talents God has given him. Look at him—with those talents—that courage which has saved lives so often at risk of his own (‘women will remember these little things,’ said Josh,) that strength ; look at him, how he has dwindled down to be a mere bread-winner for that woman, who cannot, cannot truly love him to let him so sacrifice himself.”’

“I looked in her face,” said Josh, “I looked at her and she at me till I understood the meaning behind her words—till she saw that her little knife, so sharp, though so tenderly sheathed in her loving, false words, had gone home—home to my heart, to its core. We looked till we saw this, and then went on up the sands, she with a brave step but her face full of pain.

“ ‘I understand you, ‘Liz,’ I said ; ‘the neighbours say among themselves, “Look at that peerless woman, Elizabeth Vandereck—good and bright as gold—how she has married a worthless, idle lubber, who barely earns her bread.”’

“She stood still and stretched out her hand, as she would stop my mouth.”

Then Joshua told how they went home, and how it was, as Elizabeth had said, no longer the same place. They both were silent and heavy-hearted. The next day, the governor—Joshua, that is—looked about him for some better berth, that he might sell his fishing-smack and go away. He had heard of something that, for want of a better, he was inclined to accept, when a thing happened, and that thing it was that took him to those islands. He was to consider the matter over about his new berth for a week, during which he had to be away on one of his fishing voyages. It was the night after the day Elizabeth had spoken to him that he set sail. He sent her word by one of his boys to come and bid him good-bye, as he could not leave the smack.

“And,” says Josh, “just as I was hoisting the topsail, they told me she was come and was on the water’s edge. I tumbled out in the little boat and rowed to shore. We both looked and felt very sadly, feeling it was the last voyage that would be so short.

“ ‘Josh,’ she said, ‘forgive me for having spoken as I did ; for I think that I scarce forgive myself, since it brings coldness between us.’”

And then Joshua told me with what full and hearty thanks he

broke the silence that had been betwixt them, and how he comforted her and told her she had shown a love passing the love of woman.

"And we parted," said Joshua; "parted—Oh, my God! was it never again to meet?"

And Joshua got up and left my side, and wandered by himself in amongst the strange tall trees.

And now a thing happened which interrupted Joshua's story.

While I was wondering about what he had not yet told me—I mean the cause of his being there in those islands, I began to fear that the danger from which we had been flying for three days was close upon us.

He had scarce turned from me a minute when I heard a sound behind me—a sound that turned all my sense and feeling into one strong wish, and that was to have him back beside me. And close companionship during those days of danger and suspense had already made me feel as if he were a part of me—the strongest part.

The sound I heard was a footstep. It was stealthy, it was close to me—very close. I don't think I ever in my life had such reluctance to look round as I had just then; it seemed as if my head would *not* turn.

At last I did turn it, and as I did so I heard a hasty step or two; but, looking, saw nothing—nothing but the trees, still and peaceful to look at.

I turned again to see if Joshua was coming back.

He was standing still, leaning against a tree.

The quiet, stealthy footsteps came again, and close to me—very close.

Suddenly Joshua roused himself and came towards me, with his eyes fixed on the ground.

Again the steps went quickly to one side, and I looked again, and saw nothing.

I said nothing to Joshua, but took hold of his arm, and it was as if my hand had spoken, for he understood. His face turned pale, but he looked on forward with me, with keen courageous eyes.

Ah! those trees—those tall wonderful shaped trees—foreign and strange to us, and looking so quiet and placid, with the sunshine on their trunks; how we looked at them, governor—you and I—and how we wondered from which of them to expect the cunning arrow to glance, or the savage form to come leaping towards us!

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#### PART V.

I LEFT off where Joshua and I stood looking in among the trees.

We had stood so for several minutes without seeing anything to

alarm us. At last Joshua made a sign to me to sit down as we were before, and signed to me too to get hold of my knife without taking it from my pocket. This I did.

We soon heard the stealthy footsteps again. They were nearer to me than Joshua, as if the movement with my knife had been seen. We listened, almost holding our breath.

Presently, Joshua half turned his head. Instantly the footsteps went back. They had not been so quiet as before. I could tell the very tree they had stopped behind. I got up and went to it, my knife in my hand.

I had no sooner got close to it than I heard a strange cry, and something sprang at me.

Joshua says I gave a cry too, and did not say a word to him for five minutes, but sat on the ground hugging a little grey monkey and listening to his yells and squeaks as if I understood all he was saying to me.

And so I did, my poor little "Friar of Orders Grey." I understood how he had suffered through having known and learnt to depend on such a selfish animal as man. I could well fancy how he had watched for me and waited; how he had gone in all directions, in the hope of meeting me, till he had well-nigh worn himself out. I understood how, when he had at last found me, he had been afraid to come to me while Joshua was by my side; how he had approached me stealthily when Joshua went away amongst the trees and made off when he came back.

I understood, too, by his thinness and sorry condition altogether, how the softer living he had enjoyed with me had unfitted him for his old wild life; how he had no appetite for his own food after sharing mine, poor as that was.

"I see—I see!" says Joshua. "Poor little chap! Associating with the superior race hasn't done much good to *you*."

"And in my travels," said I, "I have seen better creatures than Friar bear witness to the same fact."

Turning his back on Joshua, he chattered to me for some time; but I learnt more from the expression of his poor bloodshot eyes than from his chattering mouth.

How far had he travelled? The governor and I both understood the importance of the question as we asked it in our thoughts of that poor exhausted creature. I had a longing to be back in my old resting place and to do the hospitable to my new-found mate so far as lay in my power.

As for poor Friar, after the first trembling and excitement at seeing me was over, and we had given him water, he lay down beside me and went to sleep, taking care to keep a firm clutch of my sleeve, that I might not again give him the slip.

Joshua went on with his story. At first he had to stop several

times through Friar showing great fright at the sound of his voice ; but presently he grew used to it, and slept peacefully while the governor talked.

And now I come to that part which you must hear from his own lips if you want to hear a story that would hold you breathless and make you think yourself listening to a bit of an exciting romance. He told it me so well I forgot where we were, and found myself filling imaginary pipes as fast as him. I shall not try to tell it as he told it. I could not ; so where's the use of attempting it ? I shall just set down the simple facts, which will not spoil his story when we—when you hear it from his own lips.

Now it seems there had been in the Wrexham harbour a schooner that had been the cause of no little gossip among the old women in men's clothes that hang about the water-side and do nothing but look out for a bit of mischief, and pounce upon it when they find it as on a bit of gold or silver. Yet, apparently, there was little about this to set their tongues going ; but go their tongues did. It was the *Zebra*, bound for — ; and the captain and owner was a friend of Joshua Vandereck's, and it was whispered that he did not intend carrying on his trading on this voyage in an altogether fair and above-board sort of way.

It had been delayed in the harbour on account of the captain's illness ; and Joshua, when he went to see him, had thought his state so bad that he had often tried to persuade him to put the command of the vessel in other hands. But, no ; Captain Garland—that was his name—was obstinate, and seemed to think he might as well give up the voyage altogether as trust the command of the *Zebra* out of his own hands. It was this man that promised to get Joshua a berth with some relative of his. This was the only creature to whom Joshua had told of what had passed between him and Elizabeth concerning his want of spirit and ambition. There was and had always been a great liking between Vandereck and Garland, and the last two or three times Josh had been to see him Garland had said,—

“ I may do something for you, old chap, some day.” Or, “ Please God this voyage turns out as I expect, I shan't forget you, Vandereck.”

That sort of thing he had often said ; and, as it was not exactly his way to say such things, Joshua had been rather puzzled.

Well, it is the second night of Joshua's voyage ; the weather promising to be foul and giving him plenty of work to keep off homesickness. “ A sail ! ” is called. The *Zebra* is within a hundred yards of them. She hails Joshua's little craft, the *Venture*. By-and-by Joshua makes out that Garland wants him to come on board. Joshua demurs. Garland begs him, for God's sake, and swears at him for a hulking lubber that doesn't see fortune when it's under his nose. More demurs on Joshua's part, and more begging and abuse on Garland's, and Josh at last goes aboard the *Zebra*.

"Garland," says Joshua, "shaking with ague and livid as foam, clutches my shoulder and pushes me before him down to the cabin, his own little cabin.

"'You look at me,' says Garland, 'as if I were a dead man already,' and he stares pitifully into my face to see what impression of his state I really have.

"My visage is a truth-telling idiot. He sees in it all my horror and grief, and drops his face into his yellow, shaking hands, and his cough racks him sorely.

"'Yes,' says he, 'I must give in, I must give in. Oh, my wretched life! Has it been a burden on my back all this time, sticking so close when I have so hated it and tried to throw it off; and now, can nothing keep it? *No physic? No will? No cherishing?*'

"I melted like a woman at the sight of that man's agony. It was fearful.

"'Well,' he said, suddenly looking up, with the generous old light in his face I remembered having seen when he was a bit of a chap that high; 'well, Vandereck, I haven't called you here to see the dying agonies of a miser. For ten years I have had this thing on my mind; for ten years I have pinched and screwed for this voyage, to buy and fit up this ship; and now—now that all is ready to hand to do what I want to do—now, if I must give all up, it shall be to no man but you, Vandereck. I am on a desperate enterprise. It is full of difficulty and hazard. It may be glorious—it may be fatal. Vandereck, will you share it with me?—I can't yet teach my tongue to say, take it of me. Will you share it with me—the difficulty and hazard—the chance of great gain or ruin.'"

Then Captain Garland told Joshua his secret, and took from a locked box all his plans and charts and laid them before him.

It seemed that twelve years before then, Garland, when a third mate aboard a ship passing these islands, had gone ashore on one of them to shoot, and had discovered, or fancied he had discovered, a way of realising enormous wealth.

He had met a native—no other than the scholar who had interpreted for Joshua,—with whom he had had a good deal of talk, and who had invited him to come again.

"It seems," says Garland to Joshua, speaking of this chap, "that some Christian had taught him to call every man 'brother,' but, at the same time, to be as wary of him as of Satan himself, for he never talked to me without his cunning eye being glued to mine, and some diabolical little instrument half hidden in his hand. I, for my part, humoured him by using the same affectionate term towards himself, and kept my pistol in my pocket and my finger on the trigger; and in this way we would sit together under the sweet-smelling blossoms of some curious tree and converse for hours. The captain allowed me to make several visits, as I always took care to return on board with



a present sufficient to please him, though not to excite his curiosity or surprise."

Garland then laid before Joshua the notes he had made of his conversations with this fellow, and the things the natives would take in exchange for pearls, which were found in much abundance and only valued by them as ornaments. They had evidently, he said, never heard that Europeans set any store by them—the same of ivory and of silver in the native state. There was a great deal, too, in Garland's papers about some very valuable mine; and this Joshua seemed to think the most promising of any.

"Well," says Joshua, "the long and the short of it is, sitting there opposite that man with his shaking hands, which seemed always trying to keep themselves free of Death's grasp, to clutch the coveted treasure which had been tempting them all these years, looking at the fire in his hollow eyes, and listening to his excited voice, I caught the island fever of him. I thought of my 'Lizbeth dressed like a duchess, and with a purse as full of gold as her heart is of charity. I thought of the grandeur of me—Josh Vandereck, the lazy good-for-naught, coming back a rich man to his native place. It seemed marvellous, and yet so easy.

"I yielded—I consented to go with him. He would not let me go ashore; he would not trust me, not he. So I wrote to my wife, trusting the secret to her, whether he should please or no. I took the letter back to my craft, and gave it to one of the boys, and bade them go back at once and instructed them in all they were to do.

"In a few hours, when I had begun to act as Garland's right hand, there began such a storm as I never saw before, as I have never seen since, as I hope never to see again whilst I live."

And here Joshua broke off, and would have from me again the whole story of how his little fishing-smack was wrecked in that very storm; how an old hat of his and a neckcloth of one of his men were washed ashore with pieces of the wreck beyond Eastwier; how Elizabeth had his death recorded in her Bible; how she called the sea his grave; and how she would lay upon it one flower of each season; and how you, Margaret, had seen her stand beside it holding a little one by each hand while she talked to them of "father," as the very bravest and best man that ever lived.

And to all this and more that you and Elizabeth have told me Joshua listened with a smile and a far-away look, and muttering now and then, in a thick voice,—

"I see—I see!"

Or,—

"Did she? Did 'Lizbeth say that?"

Or,—

"Ah! yes; that's 'Lizbeth!"

Or, with a sudden burst that would make poor Friar jump,—

"God bless her! Now, God bless that woman!"

Well, then Joshua took up the talk again, and told me how it fared with him and Captain Garland aboard the *Zebra*.

"Almost at the outset," says Joshua, "Garland made me, as I may say, acting commander, though it was not long before I was captain in every sense of the word.

"'It's no use,' poor Garland said once, when he was trying to think something out for me. 'It's no use, Vandereck, you must take it all into your own hands. I little thought to say that to any man about this ship and this voyage. Ah, how I have thought of it these ten long years! And now—now that I have realised all my hopes as regards this ship—now that I have really set out, Death is after it. I feel him following it as in full sail. There is a fear—an unceasing fever and restlessness in my blood—that makes me know I am pursued. I hear strange noises, as of the flapping of ghostly sails. I see, with these half-blind, burning eyes, phantom masts crossing and entangling with mine. And if ever I see that land, that shore of shores,' he said, looking at me with a despair such as I had never seen, 'if ever I get within eyesight of it, Vandereck, I know—I know what pilot will come to meet me.'"

Then Joshua told me how well they braved that storm, though Garland's crew were as surly a set as he had ever been thrown amongst.

Then they wanted to go back, and turned crusty. Joshua, in the captain's name, ruled them as with a rod of iron. He was beset on all sides with difficulties. The rascals even burned some of his charts and things. He lost months and months going out of his way. Provisions fell short.

He was successful at last, and found himself one morning going ashore on that island on which, it seemed, he was to remain his life through.

The rascally crew! Oh! if ever I come across one of them I'll make the world too hot for him. Joshua rows ashore several times, sees the natives, converses with our friend "Brother Wiseacre," brings him specimens of the things he wishes to make exchanges for, and gets on so well his hopes grow and grow.

He has to make a three days' stay once far inland.

"I come at evening," says he, "happy and full of hope. I come to where I left my little boat. There it is, dancing in the sunlight. I hear chattering among those behind me. I look, and see them all staring across the sea. I, too, stare across the sea. My ship! my ship! Where is she? Oh, that white speck! Shall I ever forget it? Shall I ever forget how I stood looking till my eyes seemed to turn blind in my head? Then the yells, the fury, of those greedy devils when they saw how all the fine things that had been promised them had disappeared! I stopped my ears and stared still, and never

thought of them till they began to lay hands on me ; and then, then a merciful Providence made me think of the fishing-net I had with me as one of the things to trade with. You know what that did ; and there is all my story."

It was now high time for us to be on the move. We woke Friar, and, as he showed a particular wish to lead the way, we allowed him to do so. We had not gone very far when I found I knew the objects about me. We were close on my old territory.

Well, we slept that night in my cave, and in the morning I showed Joshua how faithful old Friar had laid a heap of sticks upon the ashes of my signal-fire.

We were some days without daring to light it.

At last we both got so weak and so despairing we thought that any movement, any effort, would be better than that monotonous, hopeless life ; so we lighted it, and kept it burning day and night.

One morning I found myself unable to lift myself up from my bed of leaves in the cave, and Joshua crawled out by himself to fetch me some fresh water and to light a fire to cook some of our dried fish for breakfast.

He had been gone hardly two minutes when he came rushing back, seized hold of my shoulders, and dragged me up.

He dragged me out of the cave, into the bright morning sunshine. I clung to him, and staggered along as best I could. I thought the natives were upon us, and I felt too weak and faint to help myself. I trusted to him like a baby.

He stood me where I could lean my back against a rock. Then he pointed out across the shining waters. I looked where he pointed, and then I looked at him, and he looked at me. Then his eyes poured, and mine poured ; and then, like two fools, we fell to shouting to one another, as if we had been miles asunder,—

"A sail ! a sail ! a sail !"

Oh, how we shouted ! and how we piled the fire !

We were in suspense the whole day long.

She sailed on stately and beautiful—ah, how beautiful to us !—and heedless as if she had never a heart in her.

I can hardly remember what we did that day ; the shore seemed as nothing to us ; ears, and eyes, and everything leaned seawards.

Looking back, I can remember that Friar seemed uncomfortable and restless. Our excitement was quite a new thing to him and he did not like it. He did not like it at all. As I sat, leaning my back against the cliffs, he would come and sidle up close to me, and watch Joshua waving a tall, slim tree on some height, or piling the signal-fire, or trying the strength of his voice. Friar would watch and look from him to me with a bewildered, troubled, piteous kind of look, as if he'd say, "What is he doing?" And then he would chatter

and blink his eyes cheerfully, and I would understand him to mean, "Never mind; whatever happens, I know I can trust to you." And you wouldn't believe how close the brute stuck to me all day.

All the morning, afternoon, and evening we hailed that ship, and signalled to her; and she took no more notice of us than did the sun in the heavens.

The night came on, and all the night we signalled to her, and hailed her; and she took no more notice of us than did the stars and moon.

Just before dawn we fell into a sleep in the open air, for Joshua, with his exertions, was almost as done up as I was with my fever, or ague, or whatever it might be that had seized me. We slept near each other, just outside my cave; and I remember Friar woke me two or three times by giving a clutch at my arm, and a little whimper.

I thought nothing of it at the time; but, poor little brute, how often I have thought of it since, and how he must have had human—ay, more than human—instincts of what was to come!

Well, when I woke fully it was a glorious day: a glare of blue over our heads, and as bright a sea as ever rolled. My starting up woke Joshua. He hardly gave me a look; he was on his feet in an instant, with his two broad hands raised to his eyes as a telescope.

Then he turned to me. I suppose, though I could not speak a word, my face somehow asked him all that I would ask; for he nodded. His eyes danced in water. He nodded and pointed with his thumb over his shoulder.

"Yes," says he, in a voice gentle and low, like a woman's, "I can see the wings of our delivering angel still—further from us, but nigher land."

I asked him to help me to our look-out place.

As we came up the path that lay over our cave, I noticed something dark lying on the light sand.

We saw that it was Friar.

We went close and looked at him. He was dead. Joshua took something up in his hand and showed it me; and his eyes were very bright. We both had one feeling, and were both ashamed of it. It was this:—We both felt how that shot from a human hand was more precious to us than the gentle, happy life it had murdered.

We looked at it, that shot in Joshua's hand, and were full of joy and excitement at its meaning.

Ah! how our eyes did search that beach, and that rock, and those other rocks for our little friend's destroyer!

What was his death to us then?—what but a matter for joy, since it proved the arrival on the island of another of our own noble race?

Joshua was the first to see a sight that made us break out shout-

ing afresh—a little bright, smart boat, stranded high and dry, a yard or two from the cliff where our signal-fire was blazing.

I believe Joshua, by the way he seized hold of me, was for rushing to it and making off at once; but, as we turned the corner, between two cliffs, we dashed against—a man—or, I should say, he dashed against us.

If I remember rightly, he was by no means as pleased with the encounter as we were; for his pistol clicked close to our face in an instant, and he made a step or two backwards, hallooing.

“Hold hard there, strangers; gently, will yer?”

Joshua, in his delight at seeing another face, fell to laughing.

The man stared at us both, and then slowly dropped his pistol, saying to Joshua,—

“Well, you’re a ticklish customer, anyhow. How long does that sort o’ fit last you, now?”

“Lord love you, mate! Stand a little out o’ the sun. You’re too bright to look at,” says Joshua, and laughs louder and louder; then, serious, on a sudden, he says,—

“Only think of us, mate; we’re alone here, poor shipwrecked sailors, and I was here four years—four years, mate—before *he* came, a prisoner to the savagest creatures. And I’ve a wife at home that thinks me dead, a wife and two children.”

The stranger leaned against the rock and stared at us. Then he took a long look all round, and said, as if to himself,—

“Wall, if you had been in the streets of New York, with one leg doubled up and one sleeve hanging loose, and a sheet o’ verses in your hand, you’d have to sing uncommon well to make that story go down Seth Barnham’s throat. But here,” and he spat, and took another long stare round, “I don’t know; it don’t look just the sort of place for lying to be fashionable in. What! tickled again, friend?”

For Joshua had begun laughing, and shaking the American’s hand.

“Oh! mate,” says he, “you are so handsome.”

“Come, you’re mighty easy to please in these parts, anyhow.”

“Oh! you don’t know what you are to us, that have only seen one another for—time out of mind.”

“Wall,” says the American, “that makes a difference, certainly. Hallo! what’s the matter with *him*?”

For just then the strength that excitement had given me had gone again. I had fallen flat at their feet.

The American gave Joshua his flask of brandy, and I heard talking as they bent over me—heard them faintly, as if I were some great distance away.

I know that Joshua begged for us to go at once to the ship; he thought a change of clothes and a bed would alone cure me. I know that the other demurred.

"He may have some bad fever," I heard him say. "I must bring the surgeon over to look at him before I dare take him aboard."

Joshua made him help to carry me out of the sun, back to our cave, and saw him depart, half affectionately, half sulkily.

"Joshua Vandereck," I said, when he came and sat by my side, as I lay on my bed of leaves, "what if I have such an illness as he speaks of? What if they will not have me aboard?"

I had seen on Joshua's face, ever since we woke that morning, that the hope which had come to him after all those hopeless years—the hope of seeing Elizabeth again, and his children and his country—the hope of being borne away, and in that very ship: that hope, I could see, had become a part of him—had set his blood on fire, and burnt up all the quiet patience and resignation he had had so long.

When I spoke about them not receiving me aboard, he quietly turned his head away from me.

He sat so long a time, and I knew that he thought, and that he suffered.

Suddenly he turned upon me, with bloodshot eyes,—

"I must go away in your ship," he said. "I cannot help it, I must, I will!"

"That's it, mate," I said. "You must. You will. Thank God, you see it so!"

"What do you mean?" he asked me; "what do you mean by speaking like that and smiling at me and looking happy? I tell you go I must, though I leave you here a-dying."

And I answered him—

"And I say go you must, though you leave me here a-dying."

*(To be continued.)*